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Narrating Identities and Educational choices

The case of migrant and Greek young people

Katartzi Evgenia

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DECLARATION

I, Katartzi Evgenia, declare that I have composed this thesis myself and that this work is my own. I further declare that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

The processes of educational decision making and formations of identity lie at the heart of the present thesis that explores the narratives of twenty-three young people with migrant and non-migrant background. The thesis analyzes the cases of eleven Greek and twelve migrant participants, of Albanian, Georgian, Armenian and Palestinian ethnicities attending two upper secondary Lyceums in Greece, one sub-urban Vocational and one inner-city Comprehensive located in the city of Thessaloniki. The narratives of young people are analyzed as performative acts and as social practices constructed locally and intersubjectively, rather than as expressions of their essentialist realities. The narrative analysis aims more specifically at demonstrating empirically the social conditionings of school choice and the intricate ways that decision-making is cross-cut by and implicated in the processes of identity formation and negotiation. The educational choices these young people are called to make are situated within the broader socio-economic and discursive milieu and within the structural arrangements of the post-16 institutional landscape of Greece. The issue of youth agency as grappling against the structural limitations of a given milieu, with its cultural particularities is at the backdrop of the present qualitative study. Young people's identities are conceptualized as being produced, negotiated and contested in a shifting context through the interactions with significant others, namely their peers, teachers and families and through the interplay of identifications, social positions, capitals, transforming individual habituses and the institutional contexts of the two schools. In more detail, the subjectively felt classed, ethnic and gendered positions are analyzed as perceived, invested and discursively performed by the young participants. Central role is attributed to the notion of habitus as embodying the complex interweaving of dispositions, discourses, collective and individual histories. It is argued that the processes of activation and re-conversion of capitals (economic, social, cultural) in which young people engage, along with the dynamic change of habitus in the face of evolving conditions in the host country, can be a potentially useful conceptual schema for understanding the ways migrant and non-migrant young people experience and make sense of their positioning in social space. The processes of drawing distinctions between perceived others and themselves mediate the ways young people engage in the weaving of their identities through a more or less ascribed, constrained and perpetually negotiated sense of belonging. In addition analytical attention is paid to the parental engagement and in particular the resources and dispositions that young people's families invest and transmit in relation to their schooling and their academic and occupational future. In this frame the narrated educational choices are embedded in young people's learner identities and familial histories and are closely linked with their projections and envisioning of the future. To conclude, the decision-making dynamics emerge through a matrix weaved by differing resources, positions and dispositions that grant young people with unequal opportunities for constructing self-narratives and engaging with school choice.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION:FRAMEWORK, GOALS AND QUESTIONS

Capitalist globalization with the attendant prevalence and pervasiveness of neo-liberal ideological apparatus has resulted in a staggering deepening of social inequalities, widening even more the distance between the poor and the privileged elites. In this era, characterized by the restructuring of capitalism and the globalized movement of capital, commodities and information an unprecedented intensification of migration waves has also been evident. Furthermore, while new forms of ethno-national and religious antagonisms revive, recession, violence, corruption and high levels of structural unemployment appear to be not only unsolvable problems at global level but also as constitutive features of the way modern societies operate.

Embedded in this context of socio-economic polarization and marginalization, social agents are unequally positioned as regards their access to resources, power and modes of being and becoming. By this it is meant that different positions with reference to social class, gender and ethno-national belonging interact to form distinct configurations of opportunities for social mobility. In this new geo-political landscape of mobility, migration, fluidity and social change, questions of identity and belonging, of culture and difference, appear at the front of this greater terrain, as they complexly entwine with material inequality.

In this frame, the exploration of mechanisms and processes that result in the unequal access to economic and representational resources seems to be all the more pertinent and imperative. Sociological and anthropological analyses have shown the role that educational institutions play in mediating and perpetuating these patterns of injustice, through their operation as ideological institutions that contribute and regulate subject formation, and as sorting mechanisms that reproduce and reward the already privileged groups (Bernstein, 1971; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979; 1990; Willis, 1977; Apple, 1986). The principles of meritocracy and of equality of opportunity, rhetorically

proclaimed to be the pillars of education's democratic character, seem to be irrevocably wounded at the cost of the least advantaged children and young people.

During the last two decades, the need for a renegotiation of the goals and spirit of education has been hotly debated in the Greek educational discourse. As Greece in 1990s has been transforming into a de facto multicultural society, questions are being raised regarding the Greek educational system's mono-cultural and ethnocentric character but also more crucially about its social role (Papakonstantinou, 1997). While the educational landscape is being enriched by the presence of children and young people with migrant background, the hitherto perceived ethno-cultural and religious homogeneity constitutes a past. The young people who do not share the same ethnic, religious, linguistic background with the vast majority of Greek, Christian-Orthodox represent over 10% of the total student population (Gotovos and Markou, 2003). Under these configurations the educational system is faced with challenges to adapt to the changing conditions and not to contribute to the further social marginalization of disadvantaged groups.

In my view, which stands in accord with Portes' perspective, the educational field, as it intersects with the factors of migration and ethnicity is becoming a "singularly appropriate" context to examine the *interplay* of social class, migratory histories and collective identities (Portes, 1996, p.5). More specifically, the enterprise of understanding the ways that inequalities in the educational field operate via the intersection of social class, ethnicity and nativity vs. migration status and gender is acknowledged as a knotty one. The complex intersectionalities make it difficult for researchers to disentangle the role of socio-economic background, ethnicity, context of reception, institutional arrangements and discourses, and illuminate the importance of each dimension and the interactions among them.

In this terrain, the goal of the present thesis is to explore the narrative constitution of young people's identity negotiations and educational choices in the context of a new

migrant-receiving country like Greece was regarded to have the potential of shedding new light on this debate. Framed theoretically at the cross-section of inter/multiculturalisms and identities with the intricate workings of families and education my motivation to engage with the specific area of interest was firmly tied to my commitment to engage in educational research that empirically demonstrates the continuing patterns of inequalities and the implications for the quest for social justice.

My academic background and my post-graduate specialization in *Intercultural and Comparative Education* further fostered my interest in the issues of migration and its intersections with the educational field. Within this frame, I conducted a small-scale qualitative study on migrant pupils' educational and occupational expectations and attitudes toward schooling. After conducting semi-structured interviews with young people from Albania, Ukraine and Rumania all attending the last grade of a Gymnasium situated in the North-West region of Greece, I gained additional insight into the textures of their academic experiences and the constrained space within which these students were forming their academic expectations and attendant decisions. I therefore believed that further research on the school lives of migrant students, in a newly receiving country such as Greece, apart from being relatively understudied and under-theorized, could also contribute significantly to the heated debate on youth identities in the light of ever-deepening inequalities and migration-related challenges.

Questions, frameworks and goals

Framed in the aforementioned context the present study sets out to explore the relation of educational decision-making processes and identity formations, through the narrative accounts of twenty-three Greek and migrant young people, aged 17-19, attending the pre-final grade of Vocational and Comprehensive Lyceum. The key aim is to shed light on the dynamic interplay of social class, ethnicity, migration status and gender, and

substantiate the intricate ways through which the educational choices and identities of young people are shaped and contested. In addition to that the present thesis aims to contribute to the debate on migrants' processes of adaptation to host societies and the educational system in particular, while drawing upon the case of migrant young people residing in Greece.

In this age of dislocation and rapid change yet punctuated by the revival of increasingly 'localized' identities how do young people narratively position themselves? In what ways are social class, ethnicity, migration status and gender implicated in the ways young people make sense of themselves and their place in social place? These questions capture the overarching goal of the study that seeks to examine the processes and the resources involved in the making sense of self and the construction of identities through narrative. Secondly, the thesis aims at empirically exploring of the textures of young people's experiences, as they navigate through the post-compulsory educational field, as they make decisions about their academic pathways and envisage their future. In this respect the questions I seek to answer relate to the ways that academic biographies and attendant trajectories take shape and entwine at the interface between families and the institutional fields of schools; and whether the processes of decision-making are differentiated across the lines of social class, ethnicity, gender and migrant vs non-migrant status. In addition to that, I will examine how academic choices are made and which are the factors that enable, constrain and ultimately determine its shape and nature interaction with institutional agents and the distinct institutional arrangements of Comprehensive and Vocational schooling.

The research process was developed to create an interactional context, conducive to the production of narrative accounts of the ways that significant transitions from compulsory to post-compulsory schooling were both experienced and articulated by young people. It is worth noting however, that the goal of the current research is not merely on providing phenomenological evidence on the choice-making and identity narrations of young people. More than that the research study aims firstly at substantiating the links and

connections between educational decisions, the specific contexts within which they are enacted and formed, and the economic, social, cultural and symbolic resources that young people possess. Secondly, it sets out to explore young people's identities, as they are constructed, negotiated, reworked and narrated as they move in the social space and make sense of their social positions. In other words, the study traces out the ways and subtleties that young participants experience and narrate their socio-economic, ethno-national, migrant and gendered positions, and the ways they form their practices through an interplay of continuity and change, of identifications and allegiances (Ricoeur, 1991; Anthias, 2002; 2001a). With reference to youth Willis (1990) posits that it constitutes a period in one's life course that quintessentially entails explorative constructions of selfhood. As he argues:

Youth is, by definition and irrespective of any wider context of social change, a time when identities are understood to be generally fluid – a period of transition during which elements of an adult self and future are explored and settled on, one way or another [...] It is also the stage where people begin to construct themselves through nuance and complexity, through difference as well as similarity (Willis, 1990; pp. 7–8)

The analysis of young people's accounts aims exactly at illustrating empirically the way that educational decisions are embedded in the processes of identity construction of young people while keeping firmly in sight the social conditionings of choice. It is argued that choices entail a struggle of becoming one's self, of becoming 'someone' and of not becoming someone else; someone else whom the 'significant others' will disavow. The struggle for recognition, for social status and for advancement is seen to be crosscut by unequal access to socio-economic, cultural and symbolic resources and varied dispositions, expectations and envisaged futures. Different positions and trajectories, distinct familial inheritances and histories, impinge on the ways young people experience the choice-making processes as they inhabit educational settings with

distinct status, thereby resulting to diverse routes and imagined paths with unequal social valour and socio-economic profits.

The narrative accounts of Greek young people depict the context within which migrant students are called to decide over the professional and educational future. The inclusion of accounts provided by both Greek and migrant young people was considered to provide the space for further comparisons to be drawn regarding the cross-cutting effects of social class, gender, ethnicity, belonging and learner biographies. It is worth noting that the content, the boundaries and the mobilization of ethno-national identities and forms of belonging are seen as shifting and changing through the dynamic interplay of identifications and dis-identifications. This further necessitates the analysis of self-narratives as embedded in a context of historically constituted social relations.

This shifting historical context is at the backdrop of the present research project, which examines the issue of youth agency as grappling against the structural limitations of a given socio-economic milieu and its attendant cultural particularities. The analysis of young people's educational decision-making is seen as rooted in the broader socioeconomic context of young people's lives and situated within the institutional context of academic and vocational post-16 schooling.

At the core of the present study lies the young person as a social actor, able to make decisions, and to take action given the existent constraints and opportunities that structure his/her everyday life. Young people are called to navigate through a dazzling array of transnational, national and regional cultural repertoires, all of which powerfully impact upon them. Above all, they face conditions characterized by cultural diversity and openness, but also uncertainty and closure. Furthermore, it has been argued that the new globalized and inexhaustible access that young people have nowadays to information, consumer roles, mass produced entertainment and advertising culture has led to a formation of a 'youth culture', that traverses boundaries and cuts across class, gender, and nationality lines (Wyn and White, 1997). Although transnational and hybrid

cultural forms might have resulted from some of these changes in the experience of young people, studies confirm the significance that social class, gender, 'race' and ethnicity continue to have on their evolving biographies, their life chances and their future envisages (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; Du-Bois-Reymond, 1998, Ball, et al 2000, Neilsen and Bramsen, 2002; 2005). Within this nexus of structured relations, young people, to borrow Skeggs's claim for women, are seen as "located in temporal processes of subjective construction. There are limitations on how they can be. Within these constraints they deploy many constructive and creative strategies to generate a sense of themselves with value" (1997, p.162)

While embarking upon the close examination of the interweaving of choices and identity constructions, the focus lies on the decisions made by young people and the factors involved in their taking, as experienced and recounted by the students. The immediate context wherein the process of choice takes place is the educational system with its specific organizational features but also the wider social-cultural milieu within which young people live and operate. The role that parental involvement plays in the processes under scrutiny is also examined but as perceived, interpreted and narrated by the young participants.

Moreover, choices are viewed as a set of practices which are deeply socially conditioned but also interactively constructed through formal and informal patterns of communication. It is commonly referred that parents, family and quasi-family members, teachers, peers, friends and the 'generalized social other', are significant interlocutors in the process of subjectivity formation. In this study these groups are viewed as significant partners in choice making process to the extent that they constitute primary sources of material and psychological support, of values and expectations, of public stories of social success and failure. These can be depicted as overlapping circles of fluctuating influence that provide the frame of choice, by defining the possible, the desirable and the socially valorised, and thereby drawing the lines of the attainable.

The aforementioned interactional processes provide the discursive material upon which the young people draw in order to construct their own personal narratives. This discursive depository contains socio-political, cultural and religious ideologies, historical narrations and traditions, local ‘myths’ and family stories that have a significant bearing upon the way young people perceive their social realities and the way they construct their accounts of it. The social networks and connections that young people’s families have access to were seen an additional form of familial assets that were traced out, in particular regarding the access of ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ knowledge (Ball and Vincent, 1998) about the educational system. As Ball and Vincent (1998, p.379) argue, choice is an integral part of the local context, which they call ‘grapevine’. In their words “choice is typically embedded in ‘the local’ and in the circulation of social myths; ‘a myth tells what one should desire ... and how to get it ...’ (Bailey, 1977, p. 4)”. These local ‘myths’ are broadly defined as widely circulated and shared beliefs over what one should wish for him/herself and how to achieve it. This matrix of beliefs is thought to structure social desire and action while simultaneously setting the standards against which social success is being measured. From the available discourses, the analysis revolves around the narratives and social myths as articulated by the students.

An exploration of the role that their families play in these processes was one of the directing axes of the interviews, which aimed at unpacking the influence of the so called ‘black box’ of familial background. Influenced by a “culturalist class analysis” (Savage, 2000), the social class position is approached as subjectively lived, discursively performed and narratively accounted by the young people. Drawing upon Bourdieu’s theoretical and empirical work, analytical attention is paid to the economic, social and cultural resources and the habitus that each family is perceived to transmit to its members in relation to schooling and future academic and professional planning. Each child is thought to inherit from his/her family not only capitals -economic, social and cultural- of a certain amount and volume, but also a certain relation towards education and knowledge (Bourdieu, 1977b; 1986). This renders each agent’s position in the educational field more or less influenced by the types of capitals their families possess

and their habitus, which is defined as a system of internalized dispositions, beliefs, and evaluations concerning his/hers past, present and imagined future in the field (Bourdieu, 1977a; Bourdieu, 1990b).

A “sense of one’s place” in the world is part of the habitus and is always something which can be conceived as relationally and inter-subjectively constructed with reference to the “sense of place of others” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p.113). Being more specific, the sense of an individual’s place is formed in relation to the places that other individuals possess, in a web of unequal social positions. This place, as a product of individual and social history, is spatially and temporally specific and rooted in the particularities of a given socio-cultural context. As individuals are being embedded in a complex web of unequal positions, the relations that are being formed between them will inevitably be relations of difference and power. These power relations, in turn, become part of the “categories of perception” of this sort of relations, by being appropriated and incorporated in the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977a).

Having in mind that habitus “is linked to individual history” (Bourdieu, 1990a, p.86) I will explore young people’s habitus by following the strands of their personal histories, as the latter are linked with family’s history, structural conditionings and opportunities, and academic trajectory and experiences . I argue that habitus can be reflected in young people’s occupational expectations and perceptions of their life chances, integrating in this way a worldview and a calculation of the probable and feasible position which might be appropriate and desirable for them, given the horizons of opportunities and the restrictions they encounter (see also Hodkinson et al, 1996).

These factors, as it will be illustrated by the unfolding of narratives, are played out in the patterns of educational choice in manifold ways, as they are variably linked with the young people’s individual histories and “learner identities” (Weil, 1986). This leads to the final focus of examination, namely the experiences and trajectories in the institutional sphere of school. The emphasis is placed on the perceived role of systemic

structures for career and transition related information provision, such as career guidance teachers, speeches, leaflets. Furthermore, the overall institutional climate is also looked at as characterised by context-specific patterns of interaction among teachers, students, parents and with a particular accent on the systemic division between Comprehensive and Vocational upper secondary schools. Under scrutiny are the ways the participants experience, conceptualize and perceive the two institutional settings, the one they found themselves in and the one they decided not be part of, is. Along these lines it is argued that choices are not products of some free-flowing process of picking and mixing. Contrastingly choices emerge as rooted in different matrices of necessities and opportunities; as framed by the materiality of the immediate contexts of their lives, the policy discourses, the educational arrangements and the social myths surrounding them.

Structure of thesis

As the first chapter sketched out the framework and the goals of the present study, the second chapter briefly draws the specificities of the Greek context within which the research was conducted. Policies and discourses concerning migration in Greece are provided, along with the specific educational policy framework and the rhetoric that prevail regarding the education of children and young people with migrant background and the division between academic and vocational post-compulsory pathways. Emphasis is placed on formal and informal aspects that characterize the educational landscape of compulsory and post-16 schooling.

The third chapter analyses in more detail the theoretical conceptualizations developed around two themes, the identity question and the educational choice-making. Concerning the former, the aspects of collective identity and difference relevant to the foci of this study, such as ethnicity, culture, social class and gender, are theorized. In the second part of the chapter the emphasis shifts to the theorizing of choice-making, drawing mainly on rational choice and social cultural reproduction theories. The goal of

this chapter is to lay down the basic theoretical concepts and tools that are being used in the conceptualization and interpretation of young people's accounts of identity formations and choices.

The fourth chapter makes reference to studies conducted in various national contexts and explore the patterns of decision-making processes that young people and families follow. Studies that have shed light on the relations between young people's identities and schooling are also referred to, as they examine the complex workings and interactions of social class, ethnicity, gender and racism.

The fifth chapter sets forth the research approach followed in this study with emphasis on the epistemological, methodological and ethical considerations that frame it. It expounds the choice of the qualitative design and of in-depth- interviewing and narrative analysis. More details are given about the setting of the two schools within which the study has taken place, the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, while the limitations of the study are also discussed.

The sixth and seventh chapters present the narrative accounts of twelve young people, 6 of Greek and 6 of migrant background attending the Comprehensive Lyceum. The eighth and ninth chapters present the narratives of eleven young people, 5 Greeks and 6 migrants, who attend the Vocational Lyceum.

Finally the tenth chapter highlights the threads that run through and across the narratives, while drawing the lines between patterns and subtleties, differences and similarities found in the accounts of young people. It summarizes the links between policies, discourses and self-narratives on one hand and positions, capitals and identifications on the other. Finally it discusses the challenges of educational policy-making and the possibilities for further exploration and research in the field of education.

Chapter 2

CONTEXT AND POLICY ANALYSIS: MIGRATION AND EDUCATION IN GREECE

This chapter sketches out the greater socio-economic, political and academic context, in which the present study has been registered. Firstly, a reference is made to migration and the way that Greece has experienced it and reacted politically to it as an E.U. member-state. Next, a brief outline of the Greek educational system is provided with emphasis on its specificities, namely the divided paths of Vocational and Comprehensive post-16 schooling and the role of ‘shadow’ education. Then, the focus turns to the legislative measures that have been taken for the education of children and young people with migrant background, followed by the analysis and critique of the educational policies under scrutiny. The analysis of the policies in question is carried out with the methodological tool of Critical Discourse Analysis, whose goals, objectives and potential are also analyzed.

The present enterprise is registered in the educational field and has at its core a significant participant of the pedagogical process, the young people of both Greek and migrant background. Nonetheless, it is regarded crucial-if not prerequisite- that the educational issues are not approached and analyzed as ripped off the socio-economic and political context whose are by-products and constituent parts. For this reason a holistic approach to the educational policy is adopted within which extra-educational parameters have been examined and taken into consideration. As Ozga argues:

Education policy is not confined to the formal relationships and processes of government, not only to schools and teachers, and to legislation affecting them. The broad definition requires that we understand it in its political, social and economic contexts, so that they also require study because of the ways in which they shape education policy (2000, p.114)

Therefore, it will be illustrative before looking in detail into the educational policy landscape, to sketch out briefly the migration policy frameworks, the context of reception and the socio-economic modes of migrants' adaptation into Greek labor market and society.

Migration in Greece: Policies, Socio-demographics and modes of integration

As it is noted by the International Organization of Migration (IOM) there are no universally accepted definitions in the migration field. The definitional variance is attributed to the fact that migration issues were traditionally addressed at the nation-state level; to the chasm that divides conceptualization from implication; and to the variety of existent theories and different perspectives according to which group make each time decisions, namely the sending country, the government of receiving country or the migrant community. Moreover the available definitions are characterized as “vague, controversial or contradictory” (IOM, 2004, p. 3).

The term ‘migration’ describes the process of moving either from one region to another within the same country (internal migration) or from one State to another, crossing an international border (external migration). It commonly includes migration of *refugees*, of *guest workers*, of *economic migrants*, both documented and undocumented, and of *migrants from former colonies* (Gibson, 1997, pp.432-436). In more detail persons migrate freely for the purpose of employment or of quest of better material, social, educational prospects for themselves and their family (*labor migration*). That’s the case of *economic immigrants* and *seasonal workers*. ‘*Undocumented*’ migrants (IOM, 2004) are persons who cross borders without the necessary official documents or who prolong their residence illegally, after the expiration of their documents (visas, permits). The terms ‘*irregular*’, ‘*illegal*’, ‘*undocumented*’ and ‘*clandestine*’ migration are used interchangeably and in loose fashion despite the different nuances and the important connotations that these terms have.

Focusing on the case of Europe, the collapse of authoritarian, communist systems of Eastern European and Balkans marked not only the passage to a post-bipolar era but also generated a large number of economic migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. Armed conflicts in former Yugoslavia and Kosovo, in Afghanistan and Palestine, civil wars in Georgia and other countries also led waves of people to seek a safer and better life to adjacent countries. Poverty, lack of job opportunities or merely the need to survive, forced thousands of people to migrate to Mediterranean countries and Greece.

Southern European countries in particular experienced the last twenty-five years political stability and economic development which resulted in the change of their position on the map of international division of resources. Moreover the nature of economic structure and activity in Mediterranean countries, namely the development of tourism, navigation, agriculture, fishery and services along with the existence of informal ('black') economy that functions away from state control, demand unskilled and semi-skilled workers, probably for seasonal employment, who would accept to take low- paid, low status jobs (King et al, 2000; Baldwin-Edwards and Arango, 1999).

Another factor that facilitates migration to Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and now Cyprus and Malta, is the geographical position of these countries, both as crossroads for three continents and as a gate or transitive stop for Western Europe. Particularly in the case of Greece the coastline of approximately 15,000 kilometers, and the hundreds of inhabited and uninhabited small islands, render the policing of borders difficult and the maritime smuggling of deprived migrants a hugely profitable trade (Antonopoulos and Winterdyk, 2006). Therefore, the more easily achievable crossing of Mediterranean countries' borders and the subsequent channeling of migrants to informal and irregular economic activity, work together to produce the largest number of undocumented and smuggled migrants in Europe.

Before analyzing the socio-demographic make-up of migrants in Greece, it is worth highlighting that since the early 1990s Greece has become one of the most popular receiving countries and nowadays appears to have the *highest per capita rate of*

migrants in European Union (National Statistical Service of Greece, 2001). According to the 2001 census the population of documented migrants was 693,837 constituting approximately 7% of the total population and 15-20% of the labor force (NSSG, 2001). Migrants from ten countries represent 91% of the total migrant population, with the 65% of it being migrants from Albania. With respect to their geographical distribution 44, 3% resides in the prefecture of Attica (Athens) and 15% in Central Macedonia, mainly in Thessaloniki. Housing issues indicate a matter of emerging social and economic marginalization, with migrants concentrating in the poorest districts of Athens and Thessaloniki and residing in the worst housing conditions (Baldwin-Edwards, 2006).

Migrants in Greece are classified to the following categories:

1. Nationals of European Union member-states who enter and reside with the proper authorization
2. Nationals of non-European Union countries who enter and reside with the proper authorization
3. Refugees and asylum seekers
4. Nationals of non-European Union countries who either enter or stay and work in breach of migrant laws
5. Ethnic Greeks (homogeneis-of Greek descent) who migrate mainly from countries of former Soviet Union (Pontos) and repatriated Greeks from U.S.A., Australia and other developed European countries

Special attention needs to be paid to the last category of Ethnic Greeks (or 'Homogeneis' like the 'Aussiedler' in Germany), who are not considered as foreigners; on the contrary, being part of the Greek diaspora, they are privileged with financial and other integration assistance and rapid naturalization procedures.

The migration and citizenship nexus is indicative of the way in which a given receiving country treats the new settlers, the migrants. According to Baldwin-Edwards “Greece has the most exclusive approach to discretionary granting of citizenship across European Union” (2006, p.105). Greek citizenship is attributed by parental nationality, namely through bloodline (*ius sanguinis*) as opposed to the case of *ius soli* when the citizenship is attributed by birthplace. As a result migrant’s children born in Greece are not granted citizenship, therefore they are considered to be migrants in the state in which were born. This fact stands in sharp contrast to the case of Ethnic Greeks who despite that they are recent migrants and they might not know the Greek language, yet are granted Greek citizenship.

Policies regulating the granting of citizenship to migrants are tightly bound up with and beg the knotty questions of national identity. It needs to be noted that in the Greek national narrative, the past, the present and the future enjoy an umbilical bond with idea of Hellenism and of the cultural legacy it bestows upon its bearers, as it is tightly interweaves with Christian-Orthodox religion and local traditions. The modern, Greek identity construction can be approached as an amalgam of myths and collective memories, of linguistic ties, religious beliefs and customs, all of which have been transformed into national sentiment, with the tradition becoming a resource and a fulcrum that motivates communitarian solidarity within the Ethnos (see Lipovac, 1993). It is important to underline that the concept of nation is enunciated with the term of ethnos, which encloses in Greek semantics as much the theorization of the pre-modern notion of a homogenous ethnic community as what has been conceptualized in the Western, Eurocentric tradition as the modern notion of nation as a political community. In the frame of this unique, context and historic-bound formation, Triantafyllidou claims that migrants constitute “internal significant others when their different language, religion or mores are perceived to threaten the cultural and/or ethnic purity of the nation” (1998, p.601).

Turning back to migration policy, during the 1990s it can be depicted as one of non-assimilation of the temporary guest-workers (Mousourou, 1991, p.168) and heavily influenced by the logic of “Fortress Europe” (Bade, 2003). These have in resulted in high percentages of undocumented migration being channeled into informal economic activity (Lamprianidis et al, 2001, p.130). As Hatziprokopiou posits, drawing upon his studies with Albanian and Bulgarian migrants in Thessaloniki, “the police-logic of governmental policy stigmatized migrants through the criminalisation of their clandestine status” (2005, p.10).

With reference to more recent policy discourse, the Law (L.3386/2005) on ‘Entrance, Residence and Social Integration of citizens of third countries in Greek country’ institutes strategies for the management of migratory influx while legislating for the first time arrangements concerning the social integration of third-country migrants in Greek territory. By social integration is defined the multilevel procedure that on one hand facilitates the third-country nationals who are legally residents to equally participate in the economic, social and cultural life of Greek society and on the other hand obliges them to respect the Greek fundamental rules and values (adjusted from Greek, Article 65 and paragraph 1).

In order the integration to be attained a program was bound to be implemented by the Greek government. The so-called ‘Complete Program for Action’, according to the legislators, secures third nationals’ successful integration after having taken into account their diverse and cultural peculiarities and without demanding the abandonment of their identities. Of great import can be regarded the fact that the centrally coordinated action is covering not only the domains of integration in the Greek labor market and active social participation but also and more significantly the certified competence in Greek language, history, culture and life style of Greek society(*ibid*, paragr.4).

Turning to the matter of long-term residents, the aforementioned elements constitute *a sine qua non* condition if a third-country national wants to be granted the status of long-term resident. That means that non-EU migrants, in addition to staying in Greece constantly for five years have to have a stable and ordinal income, a complete health

insurance while they have to be in the position to prove their proficiency in Greek language, history and culture.

It is important to note that Greek educational legislation allows citizens of third-countries to enroll their children in Greek schools, even if they are not legal residents and cannot submit the required documents. Article 72 of L.3386 on 'Entrance, Residence and Social Integration of third-country nationals in Greek territory' restated the right of free access of minors who are children of third-country nationals in Greek educational institutions irrespective of the origin and the residence status of their parents and even in the cases where parents are not in the position to provide the necessary documents to the school authorities for enrollment to take effect. Lastly, within the same framework of L.3386 and specifically in the chapter regarding the obligations and rights that third-country nationals enjoy in Greece, is mentioned the issue of "optional tuition of mother tongue and culture wherever exists sufficient number of students who are interested". However, this provision of the Law remains marginally implemented- if implemented at all.

The migration policy, notwithstanding the attempts for rationalization and the legalistic rhetoric for social integration, has remained incoherent and exclusionary and has led the majority of migrants to a state of illegality and uncertainty. As Alvaro et al claim "the legal system as well as administrative practices forces most migrants and their families to live in a state of permanent insecurity and dependence" (2008, p.108). All these parameters severely impact on the migrants' quality of life, as Hatziprokopiou posits in the following quote:

Life under clandestine status entailed much more than working informally: irregular migrants experience a constant insecurity: they are afraid of being arrested by the police, they hide and limit their public presence to what is necessary (Hatziprokopiou, 2005, p.8)

As regards the media discourse on migration, is not random the frequency with which the Greek media broadcast pictures of destitute ‘clandestine’ migrants that try by any means, by sea or land, and while putting in high danger their lives, to cross Greek borders. Those undesirable, ‘clandestine’ migrants tend to be portrayed as criminals and be delimited within a mono-dimensional, simplistic and pre-fabricated social image. There are claims that the construction and dominance of these stereotypical images of migrants as criminals in media discourse were in turn diffused in civil society (Hatziprokopiou, 2005; Marvakis et al, 2001)

With reference to the occupational profile of migrants, Hatziprokopiou notes a concentration in two types of jobs, “either manual positions in construction and manufacture (including small workshops), or posts at the lowest ladders of the service sector (retail trade, cafes and restaurants, domestic service and care)” (2005, p.11). As regards the nature of the work migrants most commonly do is routine, strenuous and “often of a servile character” (ibid).

Several studies have also documented the multiple forms of exclusion that Albanians, which is by far the largest migrant group (65%) in Greece, have been facing (Lazaridis and Psimmenos, 2000; Labrianidis et al 2001; King et al, 2000). Lazaridis (1999) has poignantly described the position that the Albanian migrants are ascribed as “the helots of the new millennium”. However, a qualitative study conducted in Thessaloniki with Albanian participants (Hatziprokopiou, 2003) challenges this extremely negative account of Albanians incorporation highlighting the “temporal and space-specific factors” (p.1053) affecting this process. As Hatziprokopiou posits, the in-depth interviews with Albanian migrants that work and live in the city have pointed to a dynamic and non-linear account of the incorporation process, since the participants appeared to “manage to organize their lives increasingly successfully in terms of work, residence and interpersonal relationships” (Hatziprokopiou, 2003 p,1053).

Hatziprokopiou makes detailed reference to the institutionalized, networks of information and support, along with the “uniquely Greek expressions of intercultural relations between the immigrants and the locals” as synergistically working to shape the adaptation of Albanians in Thessaloniki (2003, p.1051). His study identified two adaptive strategies used by Albanian migrants which “aimed at facilitating their own and their children’s acculturation in the host society” (ibid) and which have particular relevance to the present study. These strategies include firstly, the conversion of Albanian migrants into Christian-Orthodox religion through their baptism by Greek employers, colleagues, neighbours and secondly the adoption of Greek names. These findings were also echoed in another study conducted in Athens and Crete exploring the adaptation dynamics of young people with migrant background (Alvaro et al, 2008). These researchers found that baptism, change of names and renouncing of ethnic origin coexisted with “a spectacular projection of identity” (2008, p.110). These were interpreted as part of the “ambivalent strategies of negotiating the terms of individual and collective social integration” (ibid) in a context where experiences of racism and discrimination proliferate. Hatziprokopiou rightly enters the caveat that:

Whilst from the Albanian side Orthodox baptism and Greek name adoption might appear to be rational adaptive tactics to living in Greece, this should not obscure the repressive and hegemonic nature of Greek society’s apparent willingness to partially incorporate (but then to deny) certain aspects of Albanian immigrants’ identity (2003, p.1051)

Greek Educational System in brief

At this point the emphasis shifts to the educational field. I will briefly present several of the defining characteristics of the Greek educational landscape which pertain to its institutional and its informal and ‘shadow’ domains. It needs noting that the Greek Educational system is characterized by a high degree of centralization and standardization, since the Ministry of Education and the Pedagogical Institute are exclusively responsible for the curriculum, the textbooks and materials, the school timetables, the employment of teachers and allocation of resources. It is a system which has not yet succumbed to the market-logic of vouchers and league-tables, though it has its own idiosyncratic and tacitly privatized nature (see also Papakonstantinou, 2003; Sianou, 2006)

Education in Greece is compulsory for all children aged 6-15. At the age of 6 children are admitted to Primary Education (*Dimotiko*) and remain for six years. Afterwards they continue to Lower Secondary Education (*Gymnasio*). After the educational reform in 1997 post-compulsory secondary education includes two school types: Comprehensive or Unified Lyceum (*Eniaio Lykeio*) and Vocational Lyceum (*Epaggelmatiko Lykeio*). Approximately 65% of the student body is enrolled in the first type of Lyceum and 35% in the latter, while for migrant young people the percentage of Vocational attendance seems to be higher, almost 47% (NSSG, 2001; Vretakou and Rouseas, 2003). The length of studies in Lyceum is three years and leads to the obtaining of ‘academic certificate’, that is considered of higher status than the respective certificates granted by Vocational Lyceum according to students’ vocational specializations.

Students’ performance in nation-wide examinations (*Panhellenics*) determines admission in Higher Education, including Universities and Higher Technological Educational Institutions. As Gouvias posits for the National Examination System:

Greece has one of the most restricted higher education systems in Europe because of [...] the numerus clausus policy introduced by the State for the allocation of university places [...] National Examination System is not just as a

reflection of class inequalities, but rather as a complex system of selection and classification, indirectly linked to the labour market structure (1997, p.305)

Graduates of Vocational schools are also entitled to participate in national level examinations under special arrangements and enter only into Higher Technological Educational Institutions (ATEI). With reference to Vocational and Comprehensive divide, this was instituted by the laws 309/1976 for comprehensive- general and 576/1977 for technical-vocational post-compulsory education. As Gouvias claims, the technical-vocational schools “remained ‘low-prestige’ institutions” and “are still mainly attended by boys” (1997, p.311). Drawing upon research conducted in late 1980s, he argues that these studies documented that “the technical lyceum is the ‘refuge’ of students from non-privileged social strata, who are forced to seek employment after the age of 18” (ibid).

In general, Vocational Lyceum and Higher Technological Institutions are perceived to be of lower quality and status by the Greek public, reflecting to great extent the widely-shared and deeply-rooted stance (Tsoukalas, 1977) that favors and credits high social value in academic knowledge and academically-oriented professions. Apart from the distinct academic and occupational prospects that Vocational schools provide, they also have distinct curriculum from which are excluded the subject of Ancient Greek, while other subjects as History and Literature are taught for fewer hours.

The ‘shadow education’, namely an informal network of private tutorial schools, constitutes another significant endemic dimension of the educational landscape and its informal privatization (Papakonstantinou, 2003; Sianou, 2006). To elaborate, these supplementary schools operate in parallel and provide support to young people mainly attending upper secondary education, and especially for the two final years that signal the intensive preparation period for National Level Examinations. More specifically, the University entrance in Greek mentality is indispensably connected with the attendance of private tutorial school for at least one year or two. For Greek young people,

attendance in private tutorial schools are part of their daily routine while for parents it constitutes a very significant part of the economic budget of the year. Hiring a very qualified tutor or securing a place at a very selective private tutorial school varies of course with family's income and social connections (Vryonides, 2007a).

Greek parents spend large amounts of money on preparatory classes, private tuition, foreign language courses, computers, and other extracurricular activities, like music and dance lessons. Especially for the preparation of their offspring in order to take the competitive National examinations and enter Higher Education, the parental expenses outnumber the public expenses as a number of studies testify (Karatzia-Staulli and Roussakis, 1999; Papakonstantinou, 2003; Psacharopoulos and Papakonstantinou 2005). Furthermore, and with reference to Higher Education Papakonstantinou's study (2003) demonstrates that the private expenses of families outweigh the state's expenses and funding in Universities. As he argues, the educational policy that entails the increase of involvement of private expenses in the demand for education, either in the form of tutorial schools for enabling the entrance in Higher Education or in the form of increased parental expenses for supporting their children's University attendance "has as its consequence the engendering of unequal opportunities in accessing education" (2003, p.206). Last but not least, the families seem eager to dispose considerably large amounts of capital in order to send their children to study abroad in case of failing the strict National level Exams. This fact explains why Greece according to OECD stands the country per capita with the biggest student population abroad (Psacharopoulos and Papakonstantinou, 2005). All these factors, as Papakonstantinou argues, not only:

Increase the cost of education but simultaneously undermine the notion of equality of opportunities that the state schooling allegedly provides. In this way though whatever educational opportunities exist, depend on the socio-economic background of parents (2003, p.32)

Regarding the socio-economic profile of the student population of Higher Education studies have noted the tendency of the educational system to become increasingly selective and hierarchically differentiated (Papakonstantinou, 2003; Sianou, 2006). It becomes evident that the number of students who come from families of working-class background and manage to enter University decreases gradually “despite the value of ‘worshipping’ education’ (Tsoukalas, 1986), which remains as a wish but cannot be actualized” (Papakonstantinou, 2003, p.142).

The ‘Intercultural’ turn to Greek education policy

In the Greek context “characterized by a modernity deficit” (Zambeta, 2000, p.152, Zambeta, 2002) scholars criticize the educational system as exhibiting an old-fashioned ethnocentrism (Gotovos, 2002) and a mono-cultural character (Papakonstantinou, 1997). The study conducted by Frangoudaki and Dragonas (1997) on the construction of national identity in the Greek educational system, demonstrated the way that Greek curricula consolidate exclusivist and ethnocentric conceptions of Greekness. During the last two decades there has been a sustained academic debate over the need for an educational reform that will not just restructure the institutional framework but it will introduce a new educational philosophy that replaces the old-fashioned assimilationist and ethnocentric approach thus better equipping young people for living and successfully integrating in the competitive European space. How then has this debate been translated into educational practice and how have the Greek Governments responded to the challenges of rapid social change, migration and increasing diversity? These are the main guiding questions that this section grapples with.

It needs to be illuminated at the onset that Greek polity perceives the existence of ‘others’ in social space through two distinct categories: the *repatriated (homogeneis)*

ethnic Greeks and the *foreigners (allodapoi)*. These categories were formed with administrative criterion and prevail not only in the legal-political discourse but also in the academic one, while underlining (if not creating) the ethno-cultural boundary that divides the two respective groups. Under the rhetorical nexus of the categories in use it can be traced, as Gotovos posits, “the ideological mark” of the official and unofficial discourse on migration (2002, p.226). Indeed, the utilization of both categories appears reflect the ideological trends and intentions of the time, while simultaneously it was reckoned to be of dubious usefulness in educational terms (Salteris, 2001). Not least because in the schooling context these two groups are treated as one, since the arrangements concerning the education of foreigners and ethnic Greeks are uniform and undifferentiated. This distinction between repatriated migrants of Greek origin (*homogeneis*) and migrants of non- Greek ethnicity (*allogeneis*), has limited analytic and practical usefulness since even the vast majority of Russian or Pontian Greeks arrived in Greek territory “without any command of the Greek language, or knowledge of the Greek school curriculum” (Baldwin-Edwards, 2005, p.27).

Turning now to the policy framework, in the mid 1970s the Royal and Presidential Decrees (R.D. 585/72; P.D. 417/77; P.D. 155/78; P.D.257/78, cited in Damanakis, 1997) constituted the initial political responses to the entry of those of Greek origin (Greek migrants returning from Northern European countries, Australia and U.S.A. and ethnic Greeks-homogeneis from former Soviet Union) and the reception of their children. Ethnic Greek students were treated with leniency since they entered lower secondary education (Gymnasium) and they were advanced to the next grade with average performance of 8/20 compared to 10/20 that was the minimum standard for the majority. Positive measures in the line of reduction of evaluation standards were enforced three decades ago and are still in power as regards their admission to Higher Educational Institutions.

In 1980 there was a turning from the ‘philanthropic’ and ‘charitable’ paradigm to a compensatory one (Damanakis, 1993; 1997). Reception Classes were introduced in 1980 and with the Law 1404 (Article 45) became enacted along with Tutorial Classes, both

aimed at facilitating the adjustment of Greek migrant's children in the Greek educational system. In 1983 was also enacted the foundation of Reception Classes for foreigner students and students originated from European Union member-states. Classes that receive students of this origin operate in accordance with European Directive of 1977 (77/486/EC) which includes provision for the instruction of the language and culture of the country of origin. Reception Classes and Tutorial/Support Classes served the explicit goal of adjustment in the Greek educational setting, providing separate and intensive support to 'repatriated' and 'foreigner' students as regards the acquisition of Greek language and their integration into the mainstream classes.

It was not till the mid 1990s that a more systematic educational policy framework was instituted in response to the altering conditions and challenges of migration and diversity encountered by Greek society. An important landmark of the educational policy enacted in this specific field is the Law 2413 of 1996 on *Greek education abroad and Intercultural Education*. As it is stated in Article 34 (124/17.6.1996, vol.A):

1. *The goal of intercultural education is the organization and functioning of schooling units at primary and secondary level that provide education to young people with educational, social and cultural particularities.*
2. *In intercultural schools are implemented the curricula of respective public schools, which are adapted to meet the particular educational, social and cultural needs of their students.*

According to Article 35 there is a possibility of founding new public and private schools of intercultural education and of creating classes and sections of intercultural education in state schools. A school can be characterized as 'intercultural' when 'repatriated ethnic Greek' and 'foreigner' students constitute at least 45 percent of its student body. These educational units are believed to "guarantee equality of opportunity", being staffed by educators with special training, knowledge on the subject of intercultural education and on teaching Greek as second language and having implemented "cutting-edge approaches to teaching and learning" (see <http://www.ypepth.gr/en-ec-page1547.h>).

Moreover a new, semi-autonomous institute was established within the Ministry of Education, the ‘Institute for the Education of Ethnic Returnees and for Intercultural Education’ (Ινστιτούτο Παιδείας Ομογενών και Διαπολιτισμικής Εκπαίδευσης, ΙΠΟΔΕ) whose purpose is the conduction of studies addressing the special educational issues deriving from the presence of the repatriated and foreigner youngsters with ‘particular’ needs.

The above outlined policy has led to the establishment of twenty-six Intercultural Schools, thirteen primary schools, nine Lower secondary schools (Gymnasium) and four upper secondary (Lyceum). In 2003 there were 422 Initiatory Classes and 556 Preparatory Departments. The Census conducted in academic year 2002/3 by Intercultural Education Institute (2004) had revealed that 98,241 foreigner students and 31,873 repatriated ones enrolled in Greek educational structures of all levels. The table below outlines in quantitative terms the situation:

Students	Nursery	%	Primary	%	Gymnasium	%	Lyceum Comprehensive + Vocational	%	Total
Foreigners	9.503	9,7	54.570	55,5	22.963	23,1	11.475	11,7	98.241
Repatriated	1.580	5,0	12.579	39,5	10.692	33,5	7.022	22,0	31.873
Both	11.083	8,5	67.149	51,6	33.385	25,7	18.497	14,2	130.114
Total Population	138.304	9,5	633.235	43,3	328.309	22,5	360.616	24,7	1.460.464

Table 1. Student population of migrant background, Source: Gotovos and Markou, IPODE (2004)

This Census constitutes the first large-scale attempt to register the population of students with migrant background, while providing information regarding age, gender, country of birth, parental nationality and school performance of the two student categories. However, the drawback that characterizes not only this research but the majority of the available data sets is the absence of the fundamental variable of socio-economic status. The lack of this type of information prevents someone from painting a more detailed and well-rounded picture of the socio-economic profile of the migrant student population and account for its differentiated routes into the educational system. Nonetheless, as several studies attest to, young people with migrant background tend to have lower achievement levels and higher drop-out rates (Nikolaou, 2000). This is attributed to their limited language skills, to their parents' pressure to work and support family income, and to early school failure in primary and lower-secondary education (Anthopoulou, 2004, p.221).

Intercultural Education: Beyond rhetoric

In this part I will analyze the cultural politics of intercultural education and question the representations and subject positions conveyed through the policy language. One might reasonably argue that the legislative turn in Greece towards 'intercultural education' has been marked by notional contradictions and tensions and fragmented policies. It is, therefore, crucial to interrogate the ways that the 'politics of difference' of intercultural education are enacted and contested in policy-making and the discursive silences and absences of the policy texts.

The official documents and policies of 'intercultural education' lay out the discursive contour lines within which the schooling of children and young people with migrant background is perceived and the students themselves labelled. A critical approach is adopted in order to make evident the ways by which the policy texts are still imbued by

a deficit perspective of migrants' education aimed at 'particularizing' and 'othering' some groups of students. Despite the pompous rhetorical declarations of the legislative prelude of Law 2413/1996, the policy text seems to be founded on essentialist assumptions of 'difference' that are fraught with disempowering elements.

The Law 2413/1996 runs the risk of constructing separate social groups that on the grounds of their different ethnic, religious and cultural identities might be stigmatized and marginalized. In the name of cultural particularity, are legitimated the foundation of separate schools along with the differential treatment of 'others'. Through these processes cultural difference might be preserved and reproduced, probably confining its agents not only to their cultural limited space but also to social margin.

As Damanakis maintained the rationale underlying the Law 2413/1996 is indeed that of separation (1997), rather than of catering for the purported "special needs" and "particularities". The contradictions of the Law can be explained, he noted few years later, by the absence of a cohesive and clear theoretical framework or in other words "by the theoretical deficit of that era". Even more interestingly he underscored that policy-makers "didn't venture consciously the transition from compensatory-assimilative education to intercultural education" (2000, pp.8-9).

The uncritical redeployment of this sort of terminology, such as "particularities" and "needs", sets the risk of further differentiation and stigmatization of some groups of pupils. Especially in the field of minority education, even the minor linguistic utterances can transmit the oppressive powers of discourse and potentially contribute in naturalizing purported "particularities" and reproducing stereotypes and power hierarchies.

The dichotomy in policy documents between a problematic minority and a 'normal' majority is not only false but also racist. Bourdieu criticizes a "classificatory mode of functioning of academic and political thought" by underlining that "the logic of the

classificatory label is very exactly that of racism, which stigmatizes its victims by imprisoning them in a negative essence” (1990a, p. 28).

Another problematic point is that ‘Intercultural Education’ has not been introduced as a cross-curricular dimension nor as a pedagogical guiding principle relevant to all students but as a separation mechanism with remedial overtones catering just for the ‘other’ students. Thus, it is rendered debatable whether ‘Intercultural’ is the correct attributive adjective for the type of education that the Greek Law establishes. The introduction and development of ostensibly ‘progressive’ policy documents it seems that nullifies, if not subverts, the actualization of a socially just discourse and policy.

Moreover, it can be argued that the Greek government introduced uncritically the terminology used elsewhere in European Union (Eurydice, 2004) through a process of “policy-borrowing” (Halpin and Troyna, 1995), without taking into account the idiosyncratic context-specific factors affecting the processes of policy formulation and implementation. Levin (1998), for instance, refers to this as an international trend, and characterizes it as “epidemic of education policy”. This cross-national educational ‘policy borrowing’, as Halpin and Troyna very insightfully suggest:

rarely has much to do with the success, however defined, of the institutional realization of particular policies in their countries of origin; rather, it has much more to do with legitimating other related policies (1995, p.304)

Therefore, policies remain rhetorical devices, which that after appropriating and enclosing concepts, such as ‘intercultural education’, then they reduce them to pure euphemism. The area of migration and intercultural education policy is one practical area where the politics of space and the politics of difference are very closely interwoven. What is of specific interest at this point is the process of the production of cultural difference per se. What counts as difference is actually being constructed historically and is embedded in economic and political relations of inequality. As far as the policy documents are concerned, these appear to take difference as a taken-for-

granted element and to concentrate on how this difference as a problem or a deficit needs to be treated by the educational system.

As Govaris and his associates argue the Greek educational system has a difficulty in responding to “a reality characterized by cultural diversity and differences in previous experiences, learning needs and interests of the student population” (Govaris *et al*, 2010, p.192). Although the need to face up to the challenges arising from diversity within Greek society is fully acknowledged by the Greek policy-makers, the provision mainly consists of rhetorical proclamations, measures relevant only to the migrant population and permeated by an implicit assimilationist approach. In this context it becomes all the more pertinent that, instead of listening and communicating ‘across cultures’ and essentialized differences, we might need first to interrogate what we assume to be the ‘otherness’ of the ‘other’ and locate the production of difference within historical processes and material struggles of a changing, interconnected world.

After having set out the contours of the educational and socio-economic context, the policies, discourses and practices that impinge upon the lives of young people of migrant and non-migrant background, I will turn to the theorization of identities and choices, in relation to basic dimensions of difference, namely ethnicity, class and gender, and the interplays with choice-making processes in the educational field.

Chapter 3

THEORIZING IDENTITIES AND EDUCATIONAL CHOICES

In an era of the globalized restructuring of capitalism a staggering deepening of social inequalities has been evidenced along with an unprecedented intensification of migration waves. In the light of inequitable affluence, of poverty and exclusion, exploitation and marginalization, grand socio-political narratives are also questioned for their interpretive capacity to explicate the complexity of the economic and socio-cultural configurations through the lens of a singular, all-encompassing theoretical framework. The alleged superiority of the Euro-centric conception of reality, history and subjectivity has been called to question by perspectives that attempt to destabilize and de-centre the ‘social’ as much as the ‘individual’.

In the new geo-political landscape that heterogeneity coexists with homogenization and cultural syncretism with the insurgence of fundamentalism, the questions of ‘identity’ and of belonging appear at the heart of this greater canvas. The revival of nationalism and the reinvention of tradition along with migration and increasing de-territorialization open up new possibilities for thinking through and about the notions of culture and difference, of time and space (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). Processes of redefining and restructuring of identities and allegiances and of challenging hitherto traditional forms of belonging, are in the middle of opposing tensions between localization and globalization. In this age of shifting subjectivities and transnational identifications, where notions of diaspora and hybridization are being increasingly used in order to map out a rapidly changing multi-polar world, Rattansi and Westwood (1992, p.4) rightfully wonder what sort of meaning can be given to ‘identity’ at all.

The present chapter examines the issues raised by the ‘identity question’ and sketches out the conceptual backdrop of the study, against which the identities’ of young people with migrant and non-background will be analyzed. This is followed by situating the present approach within the theorization of ethnicities, racisms, social class, culture and gender, by which it is informed. The second thread outlines theories that provide useful

insights as regards the complex ways by which young people engage in decision making processes and illuminate how educational choices are implicated in the processes of identity-formation. The role of education as serving to legitimate the conservation and exacerbation of social inequalities will also be attended to.

Reconsidering identities in the age of globalization and individualization

In post-traditional order, Giddens's conceptualization of identity construction as an individual project that has lost its secured moorings has marked a shift in sociological discourses on identities. Giddens (1991) has famously claimed that the self becomes a 'reflexive project' (p. 32), negotiating "life-style choices among a diversity of options" (p.5). In his perspective "self-identity is not a distinctive trait possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her/his biography" (1991, p.53).

Beck (1992; 1994) from a similar standpoint speaks of the advent of an advanced modernization whose prominent feature is not only the rise of 'the world risk society' but also of a process termed 'individualization'. The latter is linked and attributed as much to the tradition's withering as to the ebbing away of other hitherto potent collective identifications of social class, ethnicity and gender. Instead as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim propose: "the choosing, deciding, shaping human being who aspires to be the author of his or her own life, the creator of an individual identity, is the central character of our time" (2002, pp. 22-23). As they have famously claimed 'social class', 'family', 'neighborhood', 'community' have degenerated to "zombie categories" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001, p.201) since they have been stripped of their living power to shape identity formations. This new and complex phase requires people in Beck's words to "produce, stage and cobble together their biographies themselves" (1994, p. 13) by engaging more intensely and deliberatively with aspects of their lives. In this context of

‘reflexive modernization’ the individuals have to make decisions, to plan and try to rationally control the diffused risks they day-to-day face. In Beck’s words “ each person’s biography is removed from given determinations and placed in his or her own hands [...] the proportion of the biography which is open and must be constructed personally is increasing” (1992, p. 135).

Castells (1997) from a different analytical perspective points to the deeply unequal nature of phenomena called as globalization and the continuing importance of local, communal identities with their living potential for resistance. He conceptualizes identities as:

Sources of meaning for the actors themselves, and by themselves, constructed through the process of individuation [...] Social actors internalize them and construct their meaning around this internalization [...] The construction of identities uses building materials from history, from geography, from biology, from productive and reproductive institutions, from collective memory and from personal fantasies, from power apparatuses and religious revelations. But individuals, social groups, and societies process all these materials and rearrange their meaning, according to social determinations and cultural projects that are rooted in their social structure and in their time/space frame (Castells, 1997, p.7)

Castles’ central thesis posits that we live in a ‘network society’ that “is based on the systemic disjunction between the local and the global” and characterized “by the separation in different time-space frames between power and experience” (1997, p.11). In this network society social action is being organized within a tension between “unidentified flows and secluded identities” (ibid. p.35). He at this point speaks of ‘secluded’ or ‘resistance’ identities which are seen as constructed around the “communal principles and traditional values of God, nation, and the family” and also “around proactive social movements”, such as feminism and environmental activism

(p.366). In his view resistance identities are as dominant in network societies as the 'individualistic projects' that Giddens and Beck describe.

Jenkins (1996) when theorizing social identities also made a special reference to *resistance* as an intrinsic element in the formation of group identities. In more detail Jenkins spoke of two processes, the *group identification* which includes the self-definition and the *categorization* which represents a definition imposed by others. These are regarded as equally significant for the making of identity through the dialectic of external and internal processes and forces (1996, p.174). Identification, and especially self-assertion, along with categorization are the two poles that bring about opportunities and open up space for resistance and oppression, as they are enmeshed in power relations. In everyday life, individuals as situated in a web of opportunities and constraints, they assert themselves but they are also named, labeled, treated in various manners and thus externally defined. Self-assertion as Jenkins claims "lies at the core of resistance to domination" (1996, p.175). Resistance in turn while taking the form of individual or collective, of organized or spontaneous 'may be a potent affirmation of group identity' (ibid).

Accounts of identity, framed within post-structuralism, feminism, post-modernism and psycho-analysis have provided useful insights into the vexed question of subject formation and identity construction. Among variably focused perspectives there can be noted a tendency to give prevalence to features of ambivalence, instability, incoherence and multi-vocality as being immanent in any process of identity formation. These theorizations highlight the indispensable role of language and discourse but also of temporality and spatiality. Among these perspectives reference can be made to Brah's (1996) conceptualization of identity as tightly connected with experience, difference and subjectivity. Instead of a fixed, unitary, given 'identity' Brah underlines the multiplicity and relationality of subject positions that lie at the heart of what subjects come at specific circumstances to see as 'identity'. In this frame she distinguishes subjectivity as "the site of processes of making sense of our relation to the world" from identity as a

“process by which the multiplicity, contradiction and instability of subjectivity is signified as having coherence, continuity and stability” (1996, p.124). Emphasizing that identity is always in process Brah argues that subjects are constituted as such through the interplay of discourses and practices, in a field of multiple loci of power. Therefore, instead of speaking about identities she states the need to analyze “discourses, matrices of meaning and historical memories” (p.124) upon which identifications are based.

By contrast Brubaker and Cooper in their essay on identity (2000) challenge and object to the analytical usage of the term ‘identity’ claiming that even post-structuralist and constructivist accounts bring through the back door the essentialism they so vehemently denounce. They criticize these perspectives for objectifying and taking the ‘existence of identity as axiomatic’:

As something that individuals and groups ‘have’, even if the content of particular identities, and the boundaries that mark groups from one another, are conceptualized as always in flux. Even constructivist language tends therefore to objectify ‘identity’ to treat it as a ‘thing’ albeit a malleable one, that people ‘have’, ‘forge’ and ‘construct’. This tendency to objectify ‘identity’ deprives us of analytical leverage. It makes it more difficult for us to treat ‘groupness’ and ‘bounded-ness’ as emergent properties of particular structural or conjunctural settings rather than as always already there in some form (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000, pp.27-28)

Moreover, ‘identity’ for them constitutes an oxymoron, that is taken to be a “singularity” albeit with multiple layers and fragments, that does not encompass the complexities of the dialectic processes that lie at the core of the interplay among meaning, context and practices. By contrast Brubaker and Cooper (2000) propose the use of alternative “analytical idioms” such as “identifications” which do not carry the ambiguity and paradox that ‘identity’ does. As they claim, (p.30):

Setting out to write about 'identifications' as they emerge, crystallize, and fade away in particular social and political circumstances may well inspire a rather different history than setting out to write of an 'identity', which links past, present, and future in a single word

In similar vein, Anthias (2001a; 2002) also critiques the heuristic value and the epistemological foundations of 'identity' as an analytical concept, while she cautions that this does not render the issues it addresses less valuable neither does it render it as less "socially meaningful concept" (2002, p.494). She instead proposes the notions of location/dislocation and positionality as more analytically useful, since they place emphasis on "spatial and contextual dimensions", while they allow the matters at hand to be handled "in terms of processes rather than possessive properties of individuals" (ibid). With relevance to positionality Anthias (2002, p.500) argues that social class, ethnicity and gender play central role in its formation. Positionality refers to identifications yet it is not exhausted to these, since it encompasses the practices through which identifications are lived out and enacted, along with the discursive and narrative conditions which allow and frame their articulation. As Anthias argues:

Positionality refers to placement within a set of relations and practices that implicate identification and 'performativity' or action. It combines a reference to social position (as a set of effectivities; as outcome) and social positioning (as a set of practices, actions and meanings; as process)...The concept involves processes of identification but is not reducible to these, for what is also signalled are the lived practices in which identification is practised/performed as well as the intersubjective, organizational and representational conditions for their existence (2002, p.501-502)

'Identities', collective and social, are being constructed in a flux of processes during which boundaries are being drawn on the basis of similarities and differences, between the self and the 'others'. Paraphrasing Anthias, it can be maintained that conceptions of

ethnicity and culture (but also of gender, religion and social class) often underlie “some of the ways in which questions of collective identity get posed” (ibid) and it is on these issues that the analysis will now focus upon.

Ethnicities, racisms and identities

There can be noted a tendency in relevant literature and discourse to relate ‘ethnicity’ as a notion that is apt in mapping out analyses about ‘ethnic minorities’ and ‘minority issues’ but not as a conceptual vehicle for analyzing the dominant, white, majorities whose ethnicity remains through these means to be concealed (Cohen, 1999; McCrone, 2002).

The mobilization of discourses concerning migration along with the fabrication of statistical categories that attempt to classify between nationals and non-nationals, citizens and non-citizens, is an example par excellence of the ways by which states and supra-national states engage in the struggle over definitions and meanings. Nation-states through the operation of institutions, among which education and media constitute the more fundamental, continue incessantly to nationalize their territories. This is the main reason why Brubaker (1996) regards more pertinent the use of the term “nationalizing-states” instead of “nation-states”, since the nationalization process cannot be thought of as completed and achieved. In this frame the discourses that aim at nationalization, or in other words, ‘nationalism’ are *not* “about imagined communities”, as very aptly Beissinger (2002) claims borrowing Anderson’s oft-quoted term (1991). Rather Beissinger states “it is more fundamentally about a struggle for control over defining communities, and in particular, for control over the imagination about community” (2002, p.18).

These processes certainly impinge on people’s perceptions and experiences but tell inevitably a part of the story when they suggest that social agents, as vessels of power,

are fashioned in a linear manner by widely circulated discourses and ideologies. Even if this is the case, the processes at play need to be illuminated and explored rather than taken as for granted as this discourse-based determinism assumes.

At this point it is useful to refer more extensively to Barth's work on *Ethnic groups and boundaries* (1969) which had a powerful impact in the way ethnicity, ethnic groups and cultures are approached by social scientists. Barth's seminal perspective significantly clarified and drew a conceptual line between culture and ethnicity. The conceptual delineation of the term 'ethnic group' possesses critical ground in his thesis. For Barth ethnic groups "are categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves" (p.10). His analysis focuses on the processes ethnic groups come to identify themselves as such through the marking off and maintaining of differences. His approach elevates the importance of boundaries that differentiate and confine ethnic groups over the mutable content, the 'cultural stuff' that is enclosed by the boundaries. He claims that the emphasis of inquiry should be placed on "the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" and he continues:

The boundaries to which we must give our attention are of course social boundaries, though they may have territorial counterparts. If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signaling membership and exclusion (Barth, 1969, p.15)

Barth not only points to the relevance of personal identification for the existence of an ethnic group but also analyzes the significance of cultural features as "signals and emblems of difference". Their use has an indicative and demarcating purpose; the cultural differences have not a meaning *per se* "they are not the sum of 'objective' differences, but only those which actors themselves regard as significant" (Barth, 1969, p.14).

Furthermore he made a strong case for the relational, interactive, comparative and situational character of ethnic identity. Identity is not simply imposed on people; it is

performed, compared and contested by a persons' significant interlocutors; thus "what matters is how well the others, with whom one interacts and to whom one is compared, manage to perform" (Barth, 1969, p.25).

Boundary demarcation and maintenance either in the form of categorization or in the form of othering groups, is not only a means for excluding those who do not belong to the in-group; more importantly it partakes in the construction and re-construction of the identities constituting and signaling who we are. In this frame, Rattansi's argument is pertinent:

Individual and collective identities are seen not as essentially given, but as constantly under construction and transformation, a process in which differentiation from Others is a powerful constitutive force [...] Identities, relationally and contingently formed, are constituted by power relations and are always to open to 'dislocation' and threatened by the 'outside' or 'other' which in part defines the positive elements (1994, p.29-31)

This approach which sees ethnicity as being associated with culture and identity is rather alive and echoed, in more or less implicit manner, in contemporary theorizations. For instance, Hall's conceptualizations (1992; 1994; 1996) have assumed a cardinal place in subverting essentialized notions of 'race' and ethnicity. Hall influentially posits that the term 'ethnicity' emphatically acknowledges "the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated and all knowledge is contextual" (1992, p.257). He proposes a positive conception of ethnicity that is "non-coercive and more diverse" since it is decoupled from the state and is set in opposition against the hegemonic conceptions that dominant ethnic groups endorse and stabilize (Hall, 1990, p.222). Ethnic identities in his conceptual frame are seen as being constantly under construction in the light of interaction between discourse, culture and history. As he famously argues ethnic

identities are “always in process and always constituted within, not outside representation” (ibid).

Hall furthermore has called for a retrieval and disarticulation of ethnicity from discourses of ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘anti-racism’; a call that has been termed as the ‘new ethnicities’ project. The notions of diaspora and hybridity have provided the new vocabulary to map out the convergence and fluidity of trans-ethnic and trans-national forms of identifications via the opening up of space where cultures meet and new cultural forms are produced. Instead of the water-tight and homogenous version of ethnicity and culture that gives rise to unitary and fixed identities, there is a ‘new ethnicity’ that celebrates cultural intermixture and speaks of multiple and ambiguous identities.

The new lexicon that the terms of diaspora and hybridity have provided has received considerable critique not least for over-emphasizing the fusion between bounded cultures and falling into the analytical trap of potentially re-instating essentialism (see Cohen, 1999; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Anthias, 2001a). Moreover it seems to leave aside or not take into sufficient consideration the web of hierarchical relations of power, the inequalities and the amount of physical and symbolic violence that still permeates the lived realities of people irrespectively of their participation in ‘hybrid’ cultural practices or their perceived ‘diasporic’ belonging.

From a different perspective Cohen in his text *The perversions of Inheritance* (1988) articulately makes the case for the ‘racialization’ of ethnicity and social class. Although he states the need for keeping the concepts of ‘race’, ethnicity and class “analytically distinct”, he urges for “remaining sensitive to their interconnection at the level of social reality” (1988, p.27). Ethnicity, he maintains, does not entail claims to nature nor to inferiority or superiority. Rather it refers to the “myth of origins” and the “real process of historical individuation” (ibid). This is a process during which a sense of collective identity is constructed whereby “partaking in linguistic and cultural practices”, re-

constructed through change, and transmitted to the next generation (p.24). Cohen yet was assertive to claim that whereas ethnicity (and social class) does not “necessarily connote race”, it can be “racialised in either biological or cultural terms” (ibid).

Cohen’s point on the racialization processes are well linked with the work of Modood and his associates (1997) on ethnic minorities in Britain, who argue for an interactive approach of ethnicity that brings in “racism and the political and economic relations between groups” (Modood et al., 1997, p.9). Racism and racialization are conceptualized as “the categorization of people on the basis of their ‘race’, or ‘ethnicity’, that leads to, amongst other things, racial discrimination and attacks” (Modood, Berthoud, Nazroo, 2002, p.420). It deserves noting that Modood (1992, p.272) when writing on the British Muslims critiques the discourse of anti-racism for insufficiently associating racism only with colour discrimination while leaving aside differences related with culture, religion and language. In the frame of their interactive rendering of ethnicity as Modood and his associates posit:

Ethnic minority groups at a particular time and place are shaped by racism, or by the attitudes, behaviours and structures of dominant groups, as well as by their own adapted heritages, collective action, reaction to exclusion, relations with other minority groups, and so on (2002, p.420)

Having taken into account the aforementioned theoretical developments, the conceptualization which is followed in the present study is informed and further influenced by the work of Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) and Anthias (1998, 2001a, 2001b, 2002). This approach emphasizes the material, relational, situational and interactive dimension of ethnicity and provides a holistic mapping out of social divisions of ethnicity/ ‘race’, social class and gender.

Ethnicity according to Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) cannot be reduced to the question of identity and culture, to a matter of collective or personal identification;

conversely they argue that ethnicity “involves belonging to a particular group and sharing its conditions of existence” (p.8). The material conditions an ethnic group faces, along with the manifold and sometimes contradictory ways it comes to be represented, perceived and externally defined from the state, and from other groups lie at the core of its formation, re-formation and re-invention at specific periods. In their words:

Ethnicity involves partaking of the social conditions of a group, which is positioned in a particular way in terms of the social allocation of resources, within a context of difference to other groups, as well as commonalities and differences within (in relation to the divisions of class and gender) (1992, p.9)

For Anthias ethnic categories are seen as “forms of social organization” that define boundaries with identity markers which in turn signal and code one’s membership and allow the articulation of claims(2002, p.498). In specific she distinguishes between an ‘ethnic group’, on one hand, which structures life conditions and “is always constructed relationally” by the means of differentiation and “ethnicization of another population” (Anthias, 2001a, p.629); and ‘ethnicity’ that involves “political mobilization on the basis of belonging” and therefore becomes potentially “linked with projects of exclusion and usurpation” (2002, p.498). Anthias interestingly posits that:

Issues of exclusion, political mobilization on the basis of collective identity and narrations of belonging and otherness cannot be addressed adequately unless they are located within other constructions of difference and identity, particularly around gender and class (2002, p.502)

Social class, culture, and identities

As it has been noted at the onset of this chapter an erudite postulation over the alleged ‘death’ of social class along with the rest modernist relics of family, nation, tradition, has been put forward as part of the individualization thesis (Beck and Beck-Gersheim, 2001, 2002). On the other hand, a strand of social theory that is framed within a ‘culturalist’ (Savage, 2000; Savage et al, 2005; Devine and Savage, 2000) and feminist, social class analysis (Lawler, 1999; Skeggs, 1997; 2004; 2005; Reay, 1997; 1998, 2006; Archer and Francis, 2006) has been providing rich empirical accounts on the significance of social class in real lives, and in the formation of identities. As Savage has astutely claimed: “While collective class identities are indeed weak, people continue to define their own individual identities in ways which inevitably involve relational comparisons with members of various social classes” (2000: xii).

The work of Bourdieu (1986/2010;1986;1987; 1990a;) has become a key point of departure for most of the above mentioned analyses and specifically his complex formulation of a model of social class based on the notions of *capitals*, *habitus* and *field*. Before embarking upon the analysis of the three fundamental concepts of his theory, it is useful to refer to the way he approached the notion of social class and its relation with gender and ethnic origin. In his classical text *Distinction* he posits that “the true nature of a class or class fraction is expressed in its distribution” by gender and ethnic origin (1986/2010, p.102); with the latter functioning “as real principles of selection and exclusion without ever being formally stated” (p.96). It is not random, he claims that “the lowest positions are designated by the fact that they include a large –and growing– proportion of immigrants or women or immigrant women” (ibid). Ethnicity and gender, in Bourdieu’s perspective, become the modalities through which class manifests itself. Particularly the sexual properties are seen “as inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of a lemon is from its acidity” (p.96).

Individuals who occupy similar positions in social space are exposed to similar experiences and have at their disposal similar resources and access to social power. By virtue of their membership in social groupings social agents form and reform their

individual class-habitus. In more detail Bourdieu claims that the “homogeneity of conditions of existence, which enables practices to be objectively harmonized without calculation or conscious reference to norms” leads to the formation of a class-habitus (1990a, p.58).

Bourdieu conceptualized habitus as a function of social class, without mentioning the factors of gender and ethnicity. Several authors argue for the incorporation of gender, ‘race’ and ethnicity into it. Bourdieu’s silence on this issue is mainly attributed to the conceptualization of social class and the key role that the latter plays in his theory.

Shared external conditions of existence and internalized dispositions, lastly, seem to have an equal bearing upon what it seems to constitute a social class as a division and as an experience. However, it is considered that the capitals possessed by agents give shape to the effects that the previous mentioned social determinants will have upon ones’ trajectory and practices. As Bourdieu (1986) characteristically notes the interpretation of social world’s structure and function inevitably requires the introduction of capital in all its types: *economic, cultural social and symbolic*. At this point it is useful to refer in more detail to the central notion of capital and its functioning. The manifestation of capital in the above guises depends on the *field* in which it operates. Each field is defined as “a network or a configuration of objective relations between positions” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 72).

According to the French theorist capital is an accumulated form of labor which in its materialized or embodied forms takes time to accumulate and which has the property to produce profits and to reproduce itself (p.46). But what specifically each form of capital entails and how are they interrelated? Bourdieu acknowledges that *cultural* and *social* capital can be generated from *economic* capital via conversion processes (Bourdieu, 1986, p.53). The former types are seen as ‘transformed’ and ‘disguised’ types of economic capital and they also are specifically effective to the extent that the fact that economic capital is at their root is hidden (p.54).

With reference to cultural capital, Bourdieu notes that this notion was conceived in order to explain the unequal educational outcomes of students from different social classes to be explained. This form of capital exists in three states: 1) In the *embodied state*, in the form of cultivation or culture which in order to be achieved a process of inculcation is required which in turn demands time investment and in some cases personal sacrifices. 2) In the *objectified state*, that means the possession of cultural goods such as paintings, books, instruments, machines. 3) In the *institutionalized state*, in which the cultural capital is “academically sanctioned by legally guaranteed qualifications” (p.50). This process not only objectifies one’s cultural competence but also lends its holder with a conventional and constant value. It produces through the “performative magic of the power of instituting” stark and lasting differences between the holders of institutionalized capital and the non-holders (p.51).

Social capital is defined as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition”(p.51). He suggests that the value of one’s bonds “depends on the size of the network of connections” he can mobilize and on the volume of the capital possessed by each connection (ibid). Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that social capital has two dimensions: firstly the social relationship through which access to resources is potentially attained and secondly the size and the quality of these resources.

However, networks of social relationships do not exist naturally and endlessly. Social connections require investment strategies in order to be constructed in the first place and then to function effectively as sources of additional profits for the agent. These strategies include constant effort for sociability and a series of material or symbolic exchanges which cost time, energy and probably money. Membership and participation in a group may allow the access to material and symbolic resources. This access presupposes material and symbolic exchanges and the precondition for the establishment and the maintenance of these exchanges is the re-acknowledgement of a certain degree of

economic and social proximity and homogeneity on behalf of the prospective members (1986, p.52).

In the Bourdieusian frame, class can be seen as an “emergent effect” (Savage et al, 2005, p.42) on practices, which emanates from the dynamic patterns of configuration between capitals, positions in the interpenetrating fields of culture and economy. At this point it is considered useful to conceptualize culture and underline its link with class and identity formations. In order to do that a definition of culture is required and one which is not derived from the discourses of ‘multi/inter-culturalism’, within which culture is typically seen as an amalgam of beliefs, rituals and traditions that “expresses the identity of a community”(Donald and Rattansi, 1992, p.4). Williams’ theoretical approach of ‘cultural materialism’ (1981) is viewed as highly pertinent in providing a perspective that crucially makes the connection between the economic and the symbolic fields. Williams achieved to draw culture from the Marxist schema of ‘superstructure’ and located it centrally in the structures of economy and politics. As he argues:

There is some practical convergence between the (i) the anthropological and sociological senses of culture as a distinct ‘whole way of life’ within which, now a distinctive ‘signifying system’ is seen not only as essential but as essentially involved in all forms of social activity, and (ii) the more specialized if also more common sense of culture as ‘artistic and intellectual activities’, though these, because of the emphasis on a general signifying system, are now much more broadly defined, to include not only the traditional arts and forms of intellectual production but also all the ‘signifying practices’ – from language through arts and philosophy to journalism, fashion and advertising- which now constitute this complex and necessary field (Williams, 1981, p.13)

Williams highlighted how what becomes manifest as ‘culture’ is constructed through ‘signifying practices’ (1981, p.13) and systems of meaning, which in turn as part of the

structures of power, are played out and consolidated through the operation of institutions such as education and family (see also Williams, 1976).

Sailing across the same tide, a 'culturalist class analysis' according to Devine and Savage (2000) has as twofold objective: firstly to "focus on how cultural processes are embedded within specific kinds of socio-economic practices" (p.193) and secondly to examine how "processes of inequality are produced and reproduced routinely and how this involves both economic and cultural practices" (p. 196). In Ball's perspective, this form of class analysis has as its defining characteristics the "collective modes of social action and social practices" (Ball, 2003, p. 11). Having that in mind Ball underlines that "class identities are not to be found within talk about categories but in practices and accounts of practices - in practices of distinction and closure" (2003, p.175).

Skeggs (1997, 2004) drawing mainly on a feminist reading of Bourdieu attempts to re-nuance social theory and analysis by re-instating class as "a major feature of subjectivity, a historical specificity and part of a struggle over access to resources and ways of being" (1997, p.7). She provides an acute conceptualization of social class pointing as much to the structural as to the emotive and affective aspects of it. She brings together an emphasis upon capitals along with a reading of class as lived and experienced affectively. Skeggs further argues that "class is reproduced through constraints on capital exchange" (1997, p.13) rendering class a matter of exclusion, access, deprivation and exploitation.

In addition, Skeggs drawing on Williams (1977) posits that "class relations are felt as they are lived" (1997, p.92), since "class operates at an intimate and emotional level" (p.13), as a "structure of feeling" (Williams, 1977)'. In this structure numerous feelings, such as uncertainty, fear, shame, doubt, insecurity, unease and resentment, "inform the production of subjectivity" (Skeggs, 1997, p.6) and come to constitute what Skeggs calls "the emotional politics of class" for the working-class women of her study (1997, p.75). This emotive element is further echoed in Reay's conceptualization of class who

drawing on her study with working-class mothers notes that “despite a pervasive denial of class status, there are emotional intimacies of class which continue to shape individuals’ everyday understandings, attitudes and actions” (1998, p.267).

Connecting ethnicity, class and gender

The above mentioned perspectives are considered of analytical value because they underline the double function of collective identities (ethno-national, classed and gendered) as not only contributing to the making, knowing, and binding of co-members of ‘our group’ but also to the delineation of who the ‘others’ are. That points to the significance of processes of boundary maintenance and social closure, of ascription and classification, of distinction and legitimation as integral dimensions in the dynamics of identity formation, negotiation and mobilization.

The above links to the relational dimension of social positioning since as Skeggs argues “from being born into gender, class and race relations we occupy the associated social positions” (1997, p.9). Butler’s work, from a post-structuralist feminist perspective heavily influenced by Foucault, provides an exemplar attempt to challenge essentialized conceptions of gender that construct the category ‘woman’ as inferior to the one of ‘man’. Butler posits that “women itself is a term in process, a becoming, a construction that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and re-signification” (1990, p.33). In the ways that we become, as Butler (1990) posits, ‘women’, in similar ways we become ‘Black’, ‘White’, ‘Greek’, ‘working class’ and so on.

Anthias and Yuval-Davis define gender as relating to “the social construction, representation organization of sexual difference and biological reproduction” (1992, p.112). However as they claim “the representations and practices around gender are themselves not the product of this difference but originate in social relations that include

those of class and race and ethnicity” (ibid). The latter are not to be seen as unitary or fixed, rather, as Anthias rightly underlines, they “involve shifting constellations of social actors, depending on the ways the boundaries of a denoted category are constructed” (2001b, p.378).

In this conceptual frame, it is plausible to argue that identifications and positionalities can only be formed in and through relations of difference and similarity, in and through the mediation of available discourses and public stories, formed in specific spatial and temporal contexts. This is not to imply that these processes occur in some free-flowing, unencumbered way; rather they are rooted in the nexus of power relations, which are structured historically and suffuse the economic, political and cultural fields. They entail distinction and closure (Ball, 2003); a perpetual dichotomization of ‘we’ and ‘others’, of ‘members’ and ‘outsiders’, of those who classify and those who are classified in accord with the shifting historical circumstances and the position and interests of the classifiers.

Since we are all unequally located in the social space we do have unequal access to capitals and different possibilities for forming and challenging our habitus. In this frame, becoming someone and not becoming someone else, having the ‘luxury’ of choice or being constrained by necessity, is mediated by the workings of two central institutional pillars: families and education. Rather than centring on the action of parents, the focus of this study lies on the young people and it is through their lenses and standpoints that the relation between identities, families, education and choices will be explored.

Linking young people’s identities, choices and education

Young people are social agents who have certain positions in the social space along the lines of their social class, ethnicity/’race’, gender. These social positions are not permanent and given but are in a constant interaction with the dispositions the social

agents possess, according to the material conditions they face in the course of their trajectory but also depending on the socialization processes in the context of family, education and the wider community. The starting point of young people's trajectories, marked by specific external conditions and a certain volume of capitals and habitus, it is thought to affect significantly the social course a young person can follow and the arrival point s/he can access. However, in the course of time the constellation of capitals under ones possession might drastically change as an outcome of more or less successful strategies of capital accumulation and reconversion and as a result of a respective change in one's life conditions, giving in turn rise to a differentiation of dispositions, such as in the case of migrants.

Young people's trajectories are visualized as being situated in the epicentre of the collective history of their family, social class, ethnic group and gender that they belong. The process of dispositions' formation can be envisaged as operating through the constant interaction between these historically formed and overlapping circles of influence. This, however, cannot be viewed as the end of the story. The educational institutions, provide yet another fundamental context within which young people not only acquire bodies of knowledge, skills and competences but also are being regulated, disciplined, examined, positioned and defined by educators and by their peers. As Apple reminds us:

We do not confront abstract 'learners' in schools. Instead we see specific classed, raced and gendered subjects, people whose biographies are intimately linked to the economic, political and ideological trajectories of their families and communities, to the political economies of their neighbourhoods (Apple, 1986, p.31)

Schools are the sites where the individual as a social actor with a unique historical trajectory, encounters other social actors and interacts with the collectively, culturally and historically constructed educational organization. This is the point where individual habituses encounter the "organizational habituses" of the schools, which are shaped and

express the class-based cultures of the communities in which they operate (McDonough, 1997, p.256; see also Reay et al, 2001b on institutional habitus).

Furthermore, young people are conceived as embedded in relations with others and within these relations they learn, they forge ties, make sense of the world and construct their identities. Through their participation in ‘communities of practice’, their developing learning, as Lave and Wenger (1991) claim, becomes a source of becoming. More specifically in their approach, social agents participate in the systems of relations, structured at given institutional environments (in their case, workplaces) and through learning processes, they become members of the communities, they acquire knowledge, but also they constantly construct their identities. In their words:

Social communities are in part systems of relations among persons. The person is defined by as well as defines these relations. Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities ... identity, knowing and social membership entail one another (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.53)

While young people partake in the educating and socializing community that the school is, they develop relationships with the social world, with significant others, namely teachers and fellow pupils, but also with knowledge and learning (Charlot, 1999). Through these interactions young people form, re-form and negotiate their “learner identities”, being the latter the situated products of their histories in the educational field. As Weil maintains:

Learner identity suggests the emergence or affirmation of values and beliefs about learning, schooling and knowledge. The construct incorporates personal, social, sociological, experiential and intellectual dimensions of learning, as integrated over time (Weil, 1986 cited in Rees et al, 1997, p.493)

Moreover, it is in the matrix of the relations with their teachers that young people start to construct their personal sense of academic worth, through assessment results (Reay and Williams, 1999), praise and devaluation, support, attention and neglect, high or low expectations. In addition, their peers' performances and standing in the educational ladder may constitute a constant point of comparison and reference in order to form their own perception of their positioning (Brooks, 2003).

Making choices in education

One of the tasks that educational sociologists are called to deliver is the unpacking of mechanisms and processes that result in unequal access to resources and opportunities, and the role that educational institutions play to perpetuate these patterns of injustice. Social inequalities can be evidenced in the educational field not only in the form of varied academic performance and differential rates of exclusion from compulsory, post-compulsory schooling and Higher Education, but also in the differentiated patterns of choice-making on behalf of young people and their families (Hatcher, 1997; Reay and Ball, 1997).

In the educational context, the decisions that should be taken at specific, pre-arranged points such as after the end of elementary, compulsory and post-compulsory education mark a transition in young people's lives which can potentially affect the ways they perceive and construct their relationship to the social world, to learning and to themselves. More specifically, the decisions that pupils are forced to make in branching points, such as the choice of the type of post-16 education, especially in systems where the division between Vocational and Comprehensive-Academic education still exists, can be of decisive import for young people's framing of life chances. More significantly in Hatcher's terms, the choices that young people make in the frame of these institutional arrangements "are one element in the process of class differentiation in

education[...]These transition points are sites of social selectivity in terms of class, and often in terms of gender and ethnicity too” (Hatcher, 1998, p.6-7).

The above mentioned, predetermined points of the educational course young people are called forth to make euphemistic ‘decisions’, on the basis of their alleged merit, capacities and expectations (Kerckhoff, 1976, pp.374-376). These institutional arrangements compartmentalize the student population in categories with distinct opportunities for post-16 education and social mobility, which in turn form the basis for distinct treatment in the labour market. These practices embody in Kerckhoff’s words’ education’s function of “social allocation” (1976).

These ‘turning points’ are structural in the sense that, as Hodkinson and his associates claim, they “are largely determined by structural patterns of life course that are built in the society where the person lives” (1996, p.142). Furthermore, “they occur at predictable times in the life course”, usually at the age of 16+, at which, as they continue arguing, “young people are forced to consider their futures” (ibid). More importantly Hodkinson et al (1996) maintain that at these points young people are called upon to make “significant, pragmatically rational, career decisions” which have the potential to transform their identities (1996, p.142).

Choice, however, cannot be limited to these undoubtedly significant stages but it comprises of numerous micro-options, taken day-to-day, in and out of the interactional context of pedagogic relationship. Without relegating the importance of the role that choices, such as the aforementioned choice of post-16 education or of curricular track play, even these are seen as constituting the apex of a series of mundane choices which young people are called to make in every-day school life. As Hatcher characteristically puts it:

The micro-options taken up by the pupil in the fine grain of interaction with the teacher accumulate within individual histories to sediment into patterns of class

inequality and to shape decisions at institutional transition points (Hatcher, 1998, p.21-22)

Reference will be made at this point to three theoretical that are mainly used to explain differences in educational choices: A) Rational Action Theory (RAT) and B) Cultural and Social Reproduction theory.

Rational Action Theory and decision making

Rational Action Theory was initially introduced by Boudon (1974) and it was further refined by Goldthorpe (1996;1998, Breen and Goldthorpe, 1997). According to Boudon (1974) primary social stratification effects are reflected in differentiated academic performance and secondary effects in the choices parents and their off-springs make at consequential points for students' educational trajectories. The aim therefore of Rational Action Theory was to offer explanations for the 'secondary effects' of social class other than the attainment levels.

Boudon (1974) considers that the social position of families is of fundamental import and determines the possibilities for social mobility, through the mediation of the educational system that engenders systemic inequalities. The familial environment engenders 'educational' inequalities, whose consequences become evident at the very early stage of schooling. On the other hand, the educational system can resemble a series of branching points at which the process of choice can be seen as a 'landscape' of decision making. The articulation of the landscape of decision making in turn might vary depending on the institutional dimensions and arrangements. In this context, the trajectory that an individual might follow depends on the social position of his/her family but also on the particular characteristics of his/her course in this landscape (successful academic career or not).

In the frame of the Rational Action Theory (or Rational Choice Theory) (Goldthorpe, 1996) the basic tenets of rational, economical thought have been incorporated. According to its postulates, the decisions are seen as the result of rational calculations in the process of which personal weaknesses, assets and interests are evaluated while costs and benefits are weighed up. As regards the educational institution, it is considered as a neutral site within which rationally thinking agents are making decision on the basis of their class locations and the benefits and costs to which these positions give rise. As Goldthorpe claims, “even when ability is held constant, children are more likely to enter longer-term and more academic courses, the more advantaged the class origins from which they come” (1996, p. 496). This is explained in terms of a decision-making processes that are founded on the maximization of benefits perceived exclusively in economic terms and leaving aside any other factors such as values, beliefs, wishes, morals, emotions. Actors by implication are viewed as having goals determined solely by the structure of costs, benefits and probabilities. Action in this frame is governed by utilitarianism and instrumentality. Goldthorpe (1996, pp.284-285) advocates a form of “methodological individualism”, analogous but distinct from the “ontological individualism”. Through the lenses of the former social phenomena are attributed to individual action and interaction (Breen and Goldthorpe, 1997, pp.304-305).

Cultural and Social Reproduction Theory and habitus

There is another perspective of social action which vehemently opposes the conscious calculation of the ‘factor-list’ model. According to Bourdieu’s *theory of cultural and social reproduction* parents transmit to their offspring the class-related advantages or disadvantages in the forms of a specific habitus and certain amounts of economic, social and cultural capital. In French sociologist’s words “each family transmits indirectly to its children a certain cultural capital and a certain ethos...which helps to define attitudes towards cultural capital and as well as towards academic institutions” (Bourdieu, 1976, p.110)

This familial ethos, what Bourdieu terms *habitus*, interacts with the specificities of a certain educational field and the varying amounts of capitals available at the disposal of families give rise and shape to the familial practices and praxis that are acted out with relation to education. Specifically, the tendency to invest time, money, effort and zeal on behalf of young people and their families can be seen as the product of the aforementioned interaction (Bourdieu, 1976). The latter also form a tendency for young people to develop attitudes and expectations, which are adapted to what is plausible to expect “for people like us” (Bourdieu 1990b, pp.64-65). This has important effects on whether students and their families will consider the educational path of Higher Education as risky choice or as the only, unquestionable, ‘educational destiny’. As Bourdieu and Passeron claim:

Depending on whether access to higher education is collectively felt, even in a diffuse way, as an impossible, possible, probable, normal or banal future, everything in the conduct of the families and the children (particularly their conduct and performance at school) will vary, because behavior tends to be governed by what is ‘reasonable’ to expect (1979, p.226)

In the Bourdieusian theory of reproduction the educational mechanism plays a decisive role as it operates, reinforces and rewards pupils according to standards and norms that are closer to the culture of the dominant class. Operating in favor of the already advantaged, Bourdieu claims (1977a) that the educational institutions espouse the ideology of ‘natural gift’ and reward the acquired and culturally inherited capacities as indicating some allegedly naturally given merit. Education by diffusing the ideology of ‘natural gift’ renders pupils (their families) responsible for their position in its hierarchy, while significantly contributes to make them believe that they are the ones who choose their academic and socio-economic future on the indisputable basis of lack or presence of individual capacities and ambitions.

School conceals skillfully this “ideological effect” (Bourdieu, 1977a, p.495) which is acted out by cutting off the social roots and determinants of ambitions, expectations and

attitudes towards education and by so doing condemn young people with disadvantaged background in self-relegation and self-deprecation (Bourdieu, 1977a). With reference to the formation of 'learner identities' and educational choices, Bourdieu (1976;1977a) in his analysis argues for the important role that objective probabilities for academic success and social mobility play along with the equally significant sway of subjective expectations. He claims that expectations constitute the expression of unconscious estimation of objective probabilities, as they became comprehensible and gradually interiorized (1976). Extending Bourdieu's reasoning, it can plausibly be argued that low expectations and negative dispositions towards schooling lead students, mainly from disadvantaged social background, to *self-elimination* by choosing a type of school of lower academic standing, and *self-exclusion* by dropping out and entering the labour market.

In this context education functions to legitimate and valorize initial inequalities transforming them into social hierarchies, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of the status quo through the reproduction of the structure of class relations. In his writing about the educational field Bourdieu uses the analogy of a game, arguing that someone "follows rules or, better, regularities that are not explicit and codified" (1990a, p.108). In this field not all the actors know the rules and how to play the game, but the most resourceful ones. That takes us back to Bourdieu's conceptualization of *capitals, field and habitus*, focusing this time on the educational field and the usefulness that these notions have in exploring the issue at hand, that is decision-making.

In this study the theoretical and analytical emphasis will focus on the notion of habitus, namely a "system of dispositions which acts as a mediation between structures and practice" (1977a, p.467) and on the capitals economic, cultural, social and symbolic that young people possess. Having already analyzed the import of the notion of capitals, this part focuses on the conceptual strengths of habitus in understanding choice-taking while demonstrating the dynamic potential habitus has as a methodological tool as for researching with young people in the educational field. As it will be showed, habitus influences not only the '*what*' but also the '*how*' of decision-making processes. As he

argues in *The Outline of a Theory of Practice*, action is produced through the operation of what Bourdieu terms “practical sense” which in turn gives to the actors “the sense of the game”. This is an “intentionality without intention which functions as the principle of strategies devoid of strategic design, without rational computation, without the conscious positing of ends” (1977b, p.108).

Habitus, dispositions and practices: the potential for change

Bourdieu defines habitus as a system of structured and structuring dispositions. Despite the tendency for the notion of disposition to be perceived as an attitudinal concept in the psychological realm, Bourdieu highlights the structural and processual dimensions within it. The sociological reinvention of the concept from Bourdieu attempted to overcome the impasse of dualism of objectivism and subjectivism and the structure-agency divide, although it has been criticized for doing the exact opposite, namely for relapsing to the determinism it attempts to defy. At this point the emphasis will turn to the notion of habitus and to its defining characteristics.

Habitus is being shaped by the changing surrounding context (*field*) and the variable resources possessed (*capital*) by certain individuals. It is formed by the opportunities and the limitations inherent to objective conditions and functions as the generative, organizing and unifying principle of practices. In the *Logic of Practice* Bourdieu more clearly explains the relation between habitus and practice. He states that:

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations (1990b, p.53)

Hence, habitus consists of “a system of acquired generative dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p.52) which mediate between structures and practices. These dispositions, being the constituent parts of habitus, do not function in a law-like manner, dictating particular courses of action; on the contrary each disposition provides “a generative capacity” (Bourdieu 1990a:13) which, as Elder-Vass put it, equip social agents with a “transposable potential to react in a certain style” (2007 p.327).

The habitus is acquired in the family, as a result of early socialization, but then it is being reformed by the force of school and constantly is being restructured in the light of “new experiences, education or training” (2001, p.29). Although habitus’s formation starts with the early socialization experiences, its reformation and restructuring is constant due to the continual encounter and accommodation of new elements. As Bourdieu highlights since habitus is “a product of history, that is of social experience and education, it may be *changed by history*” (2001, p.29).

At this point two significant characteristics of habitus should be underlined, namely its embodied and historical nature. With reference to the former, habitus comprises of cognitive, mental structures which constitute an internalized form of social structures. Through the process of appropriation and socialization these mental structured schemata become embodied. The dispositions produced become embedded, sometimes in the most automatic and physical way, without the prerequisite of conscious and deliberative aiming and acting. The way we move our bodies, the way we speak, our accent even, constitute examples of the almost unconscious way that our dispositions become part of our embodied nature and history. Being the incorporated structural force of apperception habitus manifest itself in very bodily forms, such as “a way of walking, a tilt of the head, facial expressions, ways of sitting and using implements [...] a tone of voice, a style of speech” (Bourdieu, 1977b, p.85)

The second defining attribute is its *historical nature* and the fact that not only is “linked to individual history” (Bourdieu, 1993, p.86) but also constitutes “embodied history,

internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history” (Bourdieu 1990b, p.56). These two points combined speak of the socio-genetic character of habitus, which refers to the evolving and socio-culturally specific process of its formation and operation. It draws upon shared cultural meanings which “are themselves socially structured because they have a social genesis” (1989, p.18) and are transmitted and inculcated in the context of a given form of interpersonal relationship. As regards dispositions Bourdieu underlines that they are open to change, thus allowing a limited space for transformation yet in a context that requires awareness, consciousness, intentionality and “pedagogic effort”:

Dispositions are long-lasting: they tend to perpetuate, to reproduce themselves, but they are not eternal. They may be changed by historical action oriented by intention and consciousness and using pedagogic devices [...] Any dimension of habitus is very difficult to change but it may be changed through this process of awareness and pedagogic effort (2001, p.29)

However, Bourdieu’s theory has been criticized as rather deterministic and allowing no room for rational and strategic decision making and acting, as leaving no space for agency and change (Nash, 1990; Charlot, 1999; Jenkins, 2002). If we accept however habitus as the product of historical practice, that is produced in the course of history, habitus then barely can be seen as immune to change, as fixed and static. Individual histories are marked simultaneously by seemingly stagnant periods and transformative, turning points. In these times, when an adjustment between the subjective, mental templates and the objective social structures is needed, habitus can potentially be transformed.

Furthermore, as Bourdieu argues habitus can “be practically transformed (always within definite boundaries) by the effect of a social trajectory leading to conditions of living different from initial ones” (1990a, p.108). In more detail he speaks of a process of

“dialectical confrontation” that occurs between habitus under the pressure of objective structures:

*When dispositions encounter conditions (including fields) different from those in which they were constructed and assembled, there is a **dialectical confrontation** between habitus, as structured structures, and objective structures. In this confrontation, habitus operates as a structuring structure able to selectively perceive and to transform the objective structure according to its own structure, while, at the same time, being re-structured, transformed in its make-up by the pressure of objective structure (2001, p.31) [emphasis in the original]*

Since habitus constitutes the structured and structuring power of adaptation, Bourdieu posits that it enables “agents to cope with the unforeseen and ever-changing situations” (1977, p.72). In this frame I align myself with Postone, Lipuma and Calhoun, who claim that it is exactly “this capacity for structured improvisation what Bourdieu calls habitus” (1993, p.4). It would be useful at this point to shift the emphasis to the relation among habitus, migration, ethnicity and gender and the implications of this question for doing research with migrant young people.

Habitus, ethnicity, migration and gender: Researching with young people

According to the preceding analysis at the core of habitus lie the dispositions, as framed by opportunities and constraints and thus reflecting the social context within which they are formed. In more specific terms LiPuma asserts that, “the internalization processes are organized along gender, ethnic, racial and regional lines” (1993, p.24) resulting in different sub-forms of habitus. Following that reasoning it is plausible to claim that every social form of situated belonging interacts with each other to produce the individual’s system of embodied dispositions. Therefore, it can be maintained that ethnic and gender-based dimensions play an equally fundamental role in the formation of

dispositions, given their constitutive part in the production of mental templates and categories of perception.

In order to understand the context within which young people's dispositions are being formed and reformed, the aspect of their belonging to an ethno-national group and/or migrant group acquires a central place. Every individual carries their personal experiences, their familial history along with the collective history of their ethnic group, gender and social class. Especially for the case of migrants, the intersection of personal history with the collective is far more consequential as it meets the third structuring power of the receiving country.

The migrant status can be characterized by what can be termed as multilevel discontinuity. Migration itself includes the notion not just of state borders' crossing but also of transcending self and other-imposed boundaries inter alia of social, linguistic and psychological nature. Socio-structural parameters that shape the contours of a certain context of reception, such as migration policies, educational provision for migrants, the structure of labour market and the attitudes that receiving majority holds towards migrants, significantly affect the emerging habitus of migrant young people. These processes are inescapably rooted and express relations of power, since as Sayad emphatically suggests:

Migration is the product and expression of an historical relation of international domination at once material and symbolic. Every migrant carries this repressed relation of power between states within himself or herself and unwittingly recapitulates and re-enacts it in their personal strategies and experiences (cited in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2000, p.175)

In addition, this unequal relation of power becomes manifest in patterns of degradation which pertain to the symbolic and psychic costs that migrants suffer due to multiple forms of social disparagement in situations of rigid stratification, based not only on ethnic distinctions but also on class and gender. These forms of oppression related with

racism, class and gender, as they constitute each other (Brah, 1996), they also become inscribed in the habitus of disadvantaged migrant and non migrant young people.

Young people nonetheless are not vessels merely receiving the omnipotent influence of the timeless and oppressive social structures. Rather they are social agents who partake in the formation of the social world surrounding them. Social research has shed and continues to shed light into that perennial conundrum of the agency as opposed to structures, through exploring the intersection of dominant discourses, individual and familial biographies and organizational structures in the field of education. The next chapter will present and analyze bodies of research that focus on the above mentioned issues and are of close relevance to the present research project.

Chapter 4

MAKING DECISIONS, FORMING IDENTITIES: YOUNG PEOPLE, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

In this section selective reference will be made to those bodies of research that explore the subtleties of choice processes in education and the relation between the latter and the formation of young people's identities. Before embarking upon examining the studies that examine these inter-related issues, it needs to be noted that social class, ethnicity and gender significantly affect young people's life-courses, planning and educational trajectories (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Du Bois-Raymond speaks of a gender-specific 'normal' biography being still in hold for young people in Europe (1998). Brannen and Nilsen (2002; 2005) also discuss the embedded-ness of young people's "time horizons" in familial and classed schemata. These patterns echo Furlong and Cartmel's point that although "collective foundations of social life have become more obscure, they continue to provide powerful frameworks which constrain young people's experiences and life chances" (2007, p.109)

Shifting now to the studies on choice making in education, these can be said to focus along two lines of research. The first body of studies examines and deals with parental decision making thereby placing parents at the centre of the choice debate, while the second stream, which has attracted the interest of significantly less researchers, focuses on the role that young people play as choice-makers.

As regards the parental decision making, researchers focus on the choice of private vs. state-funded schools, the choice of primary school (Reay 1996) and secondary school (Gewirtz et al. 1995) and the differentiation of parental way of choosing across the line of social class (Reay and Ball, 1997 about working class parents; Ball and Vincent, 2001; Reay, 1998; Reay et al 2008; Gewirtz *et al*, 1995).

A qualitative study conducted by Gewirtz et al (1995) on parental choice-making of secondary school, criticizes the 'factor/list approach' that has prevailed in research on educational choice and which "bears a strong resemblance to the assumptions that underlie economists' abstract accounts of market behaviour" (Gewirtz, et al,1995, p.6). As they argue this approach "fails to capture the messy, multidimensional, intuitive and seemingly irrational or non-rational elements of choice" (ibid). They instead liken the process of choice-making with a "landscape of choice" which emerges to be "amorphous, processual, tentative and intuitive" (ibid, p.76).

In more general terms, it can be argued that the nature of parental involvement is influenced by the context of general institutional arrangements and structured by the welfare policy of each state. The parental strategies range from simple, outspoken strategies of investing in private education to more intricate and multifaceted choices of investing in private tuition. Allatt's (1993) qualitative study on "becoming privileged" underlines the continuing power of middle-class parental strategies on preparing and forming their offspring's higher education choices. Her study highlights the important role of social networks and social capital in influencing the choice making process:

Not only did parents possess social capital vested in the social networks they used on behalf of their children, but parents also fostered in the young the skills necessary for the creation of their own social capital – sociability and an understanding of the mechanisms of social networking (Allatt, 1993, p.143)

Ball and Vincent (1998) explore further the role that access to local, formal and informal, networks play in shaping parental choice and "in developing an understanding of the practices and meaning of choice" itself (p.378). The parents, depending on their social class and degree of embedded-ness in the locality, appeared to be differentially positioned as regards the access to networks and concomitantly the access to valuable, academic knowledge (pp.384-385). As Ball and Vincent posit, there has been a tendency

on behalf of parents to mobilize and use differentially allegedly ‘objective’ knowledge emanating from official sources and experiential knowledge coming from personal contacts and hearsay. The distinction of what they termed as ‘cold’ and ‘hot’ knowledge had a significant bearing on how educational choices were formed:

‘Official’ knowledge is ‘cold’ knowledge, normally constructed specifically for public dissemination. The form it takes is abstract—examination results, lists of school activities, outlines of school policies, etc. ‘Grapevine’ knowledge is ‘hot’ knowledge, based on affective responses or direct experience (1998, p.380)

Drawing upon the aforementioned studies that represent very illustrative examples of this stream of research, it can be plausibly claimed that there is ample evidence of rational, cost-benefit calculations on behalf of middle-class parents, who make decisions on the basis of “simple self-interest, the objective choices of reproduction”(Gewirtz et al, 1995, p.40). Other studies which examined the relationship between the middle-classes and schooling make reference to a mixture of individualism, elitism and exclusivity that seem to pervade the discourses of this group. Jordan, Redley and James (1994) in their seminal study of middle-class identities and choices underline that this pattern was particularly evident with reference to the educational decisions they had to make. Their group of affluent parents exhibit an “individualism in action” (p.222) which is captured by the motto of ‘putting the family first’ and a general stance of pursuing a head-start for their children. Along the same perspective, Ball (2003) problematizes parental involvement by positing that a growing individualism becomes prevalent among the middle-classes, underpinned and amplified by the all-pervading neo-liberal, mass, consumerist culture which puts the premium on competition and self-pursuit.

In a similar vein, but researching the practices of a specific fraction of middle-class parents, Reay and her associates (2007a; 2007b; 2008) examine the psycho-social dimensions of middle-class choice, among those who exhibit a commitment to comprehensive schooling. While these parents chose for their children to be educated

close to “class and ethnic others”, yet they were found to preserve at the same time a ‘safe distance’ through demonstrating a “personal cultivation of distinction through social distancing” (Reay et al, 2008, p.251). As the authors conclude, these parents express “more self-interest than altruism and a superficial endorsement of social mix rather than any actual commitment to social mixing” (ibid, p.252). A seemingly ‘risky’ choice seems according to the authors to constitute yet another “way of resourcing the middle-class self” (ibid).

It can be maintained that what becomes evident from this host of studies on middle-class parental decision-making, is a pattern characterized on one hand by a conscious attempt to ‘defend the distinction’ and preserve the class advantage and on the other hand to avoid social mixing, particularly with the perceived ‘classed others’.

However numerous studies on parental choice-making, speak of ‘middle-class strategies’ as implicitly opposed to ‘working-class strategies’. Consequently, the pattern of working-class choice is often judged according to the purported ‘norm’ which is represented by the middle-class practices. As Reay and Ball neatly put it “educational choice is typically theorised in terms of an implicit middle-class norm. The possibility of other experiences of or orientations to choice is ignored” (1997, p.90). Within theses discourses the working-class experience is either silenced or portrayed as inferior and as constituting a form of social pathology by “conflating it with middle-class experience or by conjuring up deficit models of the working classes” (ibid). As a consequence of the normative constructions of educational choice can be seen the attendant discursive portrayal of working-class decisions as ill-informed and inadequately considered. Conversely, the respective middle-class choices in the educational field are portrayed as generically informed, rational and carefully and attentively considered.

Reay and Ball (1997) in their exploration of working-class educational choices, they refer to a denial on behalf of working-class parents to ‘play the market’. They interpret this refusal as “a rational avoidance of high risk choices” that relate either to private or

highly selective schools. This is explained by signs of self-exclusion and forms of self-stigmatization that are evident in the parental narratives. The negative school experiences those parents had, seemed to have led them to endorse a “rational mixture of pragmatism and defensiveness in the face of endemic, working-class academic failure” (p.95) as several participants have articulated.

As regards the school future of their children, though, there is no simple, straight forward pattern; from the one side the urge towards the familiar and the safe, and from the other the wish that their children do not become like them. In addition to that, Reay in her analyses of working-class mothers (1998) raises the issue of powerlessness, by emphasizing the overshadowing role that constraints play in the choice-making process and more specifically the material resources, the social location and the localized impact of geography.

It could be reasonably argued that the patterns of working-class choice-making is qualitatively different from the respective middle-class, to the extent that the former reflect different lived realities, worries and approaches to schooling and life, shaped and re-shaped by evolving social conditions of economic polarization. This challenges the validity of constructions of working-class choice as non-rational, ill-informed and ill-considered. By contrast, as it will be argued and demonstrated what constitutes a ‘choice’ itself varies along the social class, ethnicity and gender lines, since it is embedded in a matrix of diversified constraints, concerns, perceptions and expectations. It is mainly these intersections that are analyzed and explored in the studies emphasizing young people’s choices, identities and their post-16 educational trajectories.

Young people’s educational choices and identities: Social class, ethnicity and gender

Within the body that examines young people's decision making which is of closer relevance to the present study, three subcategories can be identified. These distinct areas examine:

- a) higher education choices with emphasis in social class differentiation (Brooks, 2003 on middle-class students; Reay et al, 2001a; Hutchings and Archer, 2001 on students from working class background;)
- b) the effect of 'race'/ethnicity and gender (Reay, 1998; Reay et al, 2001b; Ball et al, 2003; Francis and Archer, 2005; Archer and Francis, 2007 Abbas, 2007; Vryonides, 2007b) on the process of choice making, expectations and identities' formation and
- c) choices and identities in Vocational training schemes and Further Education (Ball et al, 1999; Hollands, 1990; Hodkinson et al, 1996; Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997; Skeggs, 1997; Colley et al, 2003)

One of the studies which constituted an illuminating conceptual resource for the design and analysis of the present study is the work of Hodkinson and his associates (1996). Their study explored the career choices and identities of a small group of ten young people, of British and working-class background, who left full time education at the age of 16 and participated in a Youth Training Scheme in U.K, part of the post-16, Vocational Education and Training (VET). Hodkinson et al (1996) conceptualize young people's involvement in decision-making with reference to their training and job placements, as being "*pragmatically rational*" as opposed to being "irrational" or following "a completely *technically rational* decision making process" (p.3). Academic decisions were found to be "both constrained and enabled by their *horizons of action*" which were thought as dialectically formed equally "by external opportunities in the training market" and by the young people's "subjective perceptions" (ibid). The latter shaping force of subjective perceptions is thought to be embedded in the identity and cultures of young people, which were in turn influenced, as Hodkinson and his associates argue "by their life histories, the interactions they have with significant others, their experiences and social and cultural background that is part of their identity" (1996, p.3).

It is useful at this point to mention that the decision making of young participants is demonstrated to be “part of the development of habitus” (p.122). Hodkinson and his colleagues (1996) drawing on Bourdieu take habitus to evolve gradually by confirming “existing dispositions” shaped by their family and their social class, but also leaving much room for variation and change at transformation “at personal turning points” (p. 156) , that is “when a person changes direction or at least considers such a change” (p.4).

According to the rich, empirical material drawn from the young people’s stories, their choices were found to be made on a pragmatic basis, utilizing information by their social networks, by experts’ knowledge and by personal, first-hand experience. Rational thought was seen to be only a small part of the process, with the remainder being shaped by goals, values, serendipity and emotions, along with disillusionment, uncertainty, lack of confidence and knowledge, and a sense of powerlessness (1996, pp.122-124). As Hodkinson posits:

These decisions were not irrational, neither were they totally rational. Such pragmatically rational decisions are governed by the person's horizons for action. These are determined by an inseparable combination of opportunities in education and the labour market, and the person's perceptions of what was available and/or suitable. They are centred upon the person's standpoint— the social, cultural and geographical position from which they view the world. The process of deciding and the actual decision made are part of a person's evolving habitus. (Hodkinson, 1998, p.160)

Another qualitative study that focuses on the processes of choice within the post-16 educational and training market in U.K. is the study of Ball and his associates (1999; 2000). Drawing upon an ethnically diverse group of 59 young people, they map out their choice-making as situated within a frame of interaction among their learning identities, ambitions, “imagined futures” and their varied “educational inheritances”. More

specifically, the researchers claim that the participants are unevenly positioned within the field of post-16 education and training, a fact that renders “the possibilities of ‘choice’ as much constructed and constrained by the young people’s educational pasts as they are by promises or anticipations of the future” (1999, p.203). Indeed, one of the conceptual tools that Ball and his associates use in order to make sense of their data on choices is through the notion of “imagined futures” (1999, p.210). As they argue three groups of young people were identified in their sample:

For some, their ‘imagined futures’ are relatively clear, relatively stable and relatively possible. For a second group their ‘imagined future’ is vague, relatively unstable and beset with uncertainties. For a third group they have at this stage no ‘imagined future’ that can provide a focus or locus for decision-making. They may display a sense of aimlessness, or see their life in terms of ‘getting by’, ‘making out’ and coping, or they are overtaken or dominated by events ‘beyond their control’ (Ball et al., 1999, p.210)

More specifically, the first group consisted of high-achieving young people who were aiming at entering Higher Education and whose families played a fundamental role in providing direction and support towards the realization of their children’s imagined academic and professional paths. Furthermore, within the group of young people whom they identified to be in a position of envisaging a “vivid imagined future, are those with strong and clear vocational commitments” (p.211) developed in most cases through working experience and training. It is particularly for these students among young people that “the relationship between vocational choice, sense of self and ‘learner identity’ seems by far the closest” (p.211). The second group consisted of young people for whom future envisioning seemed vague, tentative and contingent. These were mainly working-class British students with no family experience of post-16 schooling and migrant students with no prior knowledge of the current educational context. For the third group of young people, the role of material constraints in combination with

“estranged” and “damaged” educational trajectories (ibid, p.212) contributed in a negative vision of the future, if any.

It is important at this point to refer to a study conducted in England by Abbas (2007) with reference to South-Asian pupils aged 16-18, attending three selective, single-sex schools and three modern schools and which sheds more light on the interplays of inter-ethnic differences, social class fractions and schooling. Abbas argues that what becomes evident from the interviews with young people is that the possession of unequal amounts of economic, cultural and social capital determines to a large extent whether these young people enrolled into prestigious forms of education. These included the ability to hire private tutors, to buy resources, to have time and space for study along with the access to informal networks. As the author maintains the social class positions are important in giving differential access to “educational knowledge” and forming the ability to “speak the language” of the educational system (2007, p.82).

In the field of Higher Education choice, a qualitative study conducted by Reay (1998) points to the multifaceted and highly differentiated patterns of decision-making across the lines not only of social class but also of ethnicity and gender. Researching a socio-economically and ethnically diverse group of secondary students, all of whom were prospective entrants in Higher Education, one of the differences she highlights is in relation to the parental involvement the young people experience in the process of HE choice making. Those young people who have working-class parents seemed to engage in a solitary and autonomous process, fraught with uncertainty, anxieties and material constraints in comparison with the certainty and the taken-for-granted-ness that HE embodies for their middle-class counterparts (p.527).

Furthermore, Reay argues for the significance that institutional factors play in the shaping of choices, and in specific the particular type of the educational institution young people attended (Further Education College, private school, comprehensive). These factors are captured by the term “institutional habitus” and point to the varied

form teachers' support and guidance can take, if any, in different settings or in the same setting towards young people with distinct familial habituses. Different amounts of capital possessed by young people with varying degrees of embedded-ness in their respective class locations were cross-cut by different institutional factors and ethnicities.

The ways class and 'race' interact to produce different patterns of decision-making in Higher Education are explored by another study by Reay and her associates (2001) who examine a diverse group of Higher Education applicants who attend 6 educational institutions of dissimilar status and composition. Drawing mainly from Bourdieu's theory they use the notion of 'sense of place' to explain why working class and minority students exclude themselves from high status Colleges and Universities. Reay and her associates illustrate how material and psychological constraints come to shape students 'choice' in a manner that is differentiated in both class and 'race' terms. They contend that ethnicity functions as "a powerful mediating factor to compound the discriminatory workings of class" (p.866). In addition to the social distance and discomfort, attributed to class background, ethnic distance makes the choice for these students difficult and traumatic. As the authors demonstrate higher education choice for ethnic minority students resembles "treading a fine line between the desire to 'fit in' and being stereotyped or discriminated against in majority settings" (2001b,p.869), a pattern that is echoed in the present study too.

Drawing from the same large-scale project, Ball and his associates (2002) analyzing in more detail the decision-making regarding the transition to higher education with reference to the 65 ethnic minority students of their sample, they speak of a particular kind of 'ethnic choosing'. However, as they claim ethnicity cannot on its own explain ethnic minority students' choices without taking into consideration the social class and the different forms of "educational inheritance" the young people possess. With respect to the social class positioning of ethnic minority students, Ball and his colleagues (pp.338-347) identify two distinct groups of choosers, the 'contingent' and the 'embedded choosers'. For these types of choosers the process of Higher Education

choice had a “class meaning, in addition to, and interwoven with its implications for ethnic identity” (p.241). Furthermore, the factor of “ethnic mix”, that is the ethnic composition of University populations, played also a role when deciding over the Higher Education applications for entrance for those applicants of working-class background and those attending Further Education colleges. As the authors explain:

What seemed to be of issues for almost all of these students, to different degrees of significance, was mix or diversity rather than the presence of significant numbers of others of the same ethnicity as themselves (Ball, et al, 2002, p.229)

Yonezawa, Wells and Serna (2002) in their study of the enactment of choice on the part of students and parents in the American context also attest to the significance that social class and ethnic-minority status play in the way the former choose between schools (see also Wells and Crain, 1998) and within schools, in terms of track placement. After researching ten socio-culturally mixed secondary schools in USA involved in de-tracking, they analyze the complicated reasons that render the institutional structures of distinct ability and curriculum classes difficult to dismantle. Tracks are not seen by the authors as mere physical places where young people are assigned a different academic position according to their ‘ability’, but as “political spaces, places where people fashion their identity and social relations” (p.39). The authors make special reference to institutional barriers, such as lack of resources, unevenly distributed information and differential responsiveness on behalf of teachers. Furthermore, tracked aspirations and the choice of respect, feature among the main factors that drive young people to deny being placed in higher status and more demanding tracks, and therefore not to exercise ‘choice’. In their words, “students bypassed more challenging classes because they hungered for ‘places of respect’” (Yonezawa *et al*, 2002, p.40)

Another study conducted by Archer and Hutchings (2000) focuses on the decision-making processes and the constructions of value and rewards of Higher Education by urban young people of diverse ethnicities and working-class background. The

researchers claim that these working-class participants articulated a notion of University studies as an inherently risky, difficult and costly choice. The latter risks are not perceived just in terms of costs and disputable benefits but also along the lines of more intricate identity negotiations and specifically of “the potential costs of losing one’s working class identity” (p.570). The participants’ constructions are framed within discourses of class and ‘race’ and mediated by their “working class, ‘racialized’ identities” (Archer and Hutchings, 2000, p.556). By contrast, the young people with an ethnic-minority background, Asian, Caribbean and African, refer to the discourse of value attached to getting a Higher Education degree by their families and the attendant financial and psychological support they receive by them. As the authors characteristically put it, for these participants and their families ‘academic failure’ is thought to be directly “translated into social failure” (p. 561).

As regards the significance that the discourse of attaching high value to education enjoys for explaining the educational performance and aspirations of minority young people, a study by Francis and Archer (2005; and Archer and Francis, 2007) on British-Chinese pupils and parents sheds more light on that. It needs mentioning that Chinese migrants have been typified in British and American literature as being “the model minority” (Kao and Tienda, 1998), which irrespectively and despite structural constraints of racism, down-ward mobility and limited competence in English manage to achieve educational success in high rates. Notwithstanding these constraints, British-Chinese young people seem to possess a “Chinese form of cultural capital” , produced by the interactions of factors such as “the construction of exceedingly high valuing of education as an aspect of British-Chinese identity” (2005, p.106), coupled with factors like the reverence and respect towards the elder and “a slice of migrant determination” .

Rassool’s study (1999) explores the issues of ethnic identity, experiences of racism and attitudes towards education of Asian and African migrant students in a comprehensive school. As it is claimed the “migrant” identities are not fixed or unitary states but are constantly changing through interactions and intersections with class, generation and

gender. However, for the young people of the study, the reality of racism and of feeling excluded led them to “reject the culture of those who reject and marginalize them as ‘other’ and find refuge in their cultural and religious traditions” (1999, p.27). Despite the internalized discriminations and the anticipation of further exclusions, the young people held high academic and professional expectations and viewed education as providing the possibilities for participating in the wider society.

The work of McLeod (2000) analyzes the interplay of social class and gender subjectivities with school discourses drawing on a longitudinal study of Australian young people aged 12-18. Through the close analysis of interviews with young people from different fractions of working-class and middle-class McLeod claims that with reference to gender subjectivities, the shifts that are evidenced through this period of years for the young people are not only “subtle and piecemeal” but more importantly are “clearly linked to the location of individuals in particular social classes and regions, their life history, and their immersion in and experience of different kinds of schools” (p.517).

Last but not least it is worth reminding that a host of ethnographic studies have provided ample evidence regarding the educational experiences and performance of ethnic-minority students in relation with the operations of gender, ethnicity and racist practices and discourses, (Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Mirza, 1992; Gillborn, 1990; 1995; Youdell, 2003; Archer and Francis, 2007). Ethnic minority students’ adaptation to schooling has been documented as involving shifting practices ranging from resistance to accommodation. In Mac an Ghaill’s study African Caribbean girls were identified as employing the strategy of “resistance within accommodation” (1988, p.9) while the boys resisted assimilation into the institutional, dominant culture and developed instead “anti-school male sub-cultures” (ibid). Similarly, Youdell’s ethnographic account of “how black students fail” makes reference to the discursive, “identity trap” (2003) within which Black students find themselves entrapped. This ‘trap’ consists of the racialized and racist constitutions of youth sub-cultural identities as intrinsically anti-school and a challenge to authority.

Overall it can be argued that ethnographic work on ethnic minority young people seem to belie arguments based on the scheme “culture of failure” or “culture of resistance” (Rattansi, 1992, p.20). As several studies on African-Caribbean and South Asian women (Mirza, 1992; Brah, 1996; Brah and Min-ha, 1986) have illuminated these young women appear to endorse complex strategies that combine an instrumental attitude towards schooling with commitment and high ambitions with awareness of racism and discrimination.

On the other hand, the role that racism plays in shaping young people’s educational experiences, outcomes and racialized subjectivities is also amply evidenced (Rattansi, 1992). Racism is manifest *inter alia* in routine practices, procedures, official /unofficial discourses and educators’ teaching styles and expectations. With particular reference to teachers, Gillborn specifies that teachers’ expectations are founded on constructions of “appropriate pupil behaviour” that integrate classed, gendered and raced notions of academic performance and marginalize the pupils who do not ‘fit in’ (Gillborn, 1990, p.26). That is also testified by Archer (2008) who speaks of the ‘impossibility’ of success (especially for Black and Muslim boys) due to the widespread racism they experience. Archer (2008) drawing on a number of studies that she and her associates have conducted, posits that the “dominant constructions of success” in schools along with the discourses of “the ideal pupil”, position differentially and exclude the ethnic minority young people. She provides evidence on how different minority populations are constructed through a “trichotomy” (pp.101-102), as “demonized” (white working-class, African Caribbean, Muslim boys), “pathologised” for “not achieving the right way” (women, Chinese, South Asian), while still others, mainly the male, White, middle-class, are seen as embodying the quintessentially ‘ideal’ type of learner and pupil.

*Young people, parental strategies and migrants in the
Greek educational context*

Before proceeding to the selective reference of studies that have been exploring the issues of educational choices in the Greek context, it is worth reminding some of dominant characteristics of this context as they have been described in the second chapter. With particular reference to the Greek case, a discourse of valuing education, similar to that identified by Archer and Francis (2007) in their sample of British-Chinese, is widely circulated and deeply-embedded. Education has been traditionally regarded as the ultimate fulcrum for social mobility and recognition (Tsoukalas, 1986).

However, the high social demand for Higher Education and the restricted access to it, not least through the “numerous clausus” admissions’ policy and the monopolization of the provision by the state (Gouvias, 1998), has led to a situation where Greek families have entered as strategic ‘players’ in the ‘game’ of social mobility-through-education. As it has been recently argued “social mobility has become an increasingly competitive project, within the context of fewer resources and much larger numbers of middle class households deploying mobility strategies” (Maloutas, 2007, p.55). These factors combined highlight the profound role that familial socio-economic background plays in determining educational opportunities and social mobility. They can be seen as part and parcel of what Brown has termed as the rise of “educational parentocracy where a child's education is increasingly dependent upon the wealth and wishes of parents, rather than the ability and efforts of pupils” (1990, p.66).

Along similar lines, research in Greek-Cypriot context has shed precious light on the monetary, but also the non-monetary types of resources that parents mobilize in the educational arena (Green and Vryonides, 2005). More specifically, Vryonides (2007a) mapped out how parents of different classed backgrounds operated within differential access to economic, cultural and social capital. These parents were accounted to have unequal amounts of knowledge of the ways the educational system and the parallel

system of tutorial schools operated (cultural capital) while they were also differentially involved in the making of decisions regarding schools, tutorial schools and specializations. Additionally as Vryonides has noted “social capital was a resource very much interconnected with cultural capital that was operating in such a way that it was extending the horizons for choice making” (2007a, p.883).

The parental strategies in Greece, as it has been noted in the second chapter, are similarly geared at increasing the chances for their offspring to enter Higher Education and its most prestigious Departments. In the light of an under-funded, state post-compulsory schooling that has been notoriously failing to meet the needs of the Greek society, parents struggle to equip their children with the skills and knowledge that the educational system does not provide, yet demands from all. Servicing this wholly acceptable and legitimate purpose, parents spend large amounts of money for preparatory classes, private tuition, foreign language courses and other extracurricular activities. In particular, the attendance of private, tutorial schools plays a hugely important role in the preparation of young people for the demanding National Examinations (Sianou-Kyrgiou, 2008), and constitutes a major financial concern for families. Last but not least, Greek parents seem eager to dispose considerably large funds in order to send their offspring to study abroad, in the case of failing the competitive National Examinations that regulate University entrance.

Interestingly, it has been argued that the above mentioned strategies are not pursued by middle-class parents only, but by the vast majority of parents, yet with a varied degree of intensity and effectiveness fact that it is claimed to be as a rather unique feature of the Greek case (Maloutas, 2007). Unfortunately, the lack of empirical evidence at the micro-level prevents someone from forming a more illuminating and well-grounded view as regards the finer texture of strategies and choices made by families and young people, and the possible divergences among different social-class fractions and ethnic groups in the Greek context. However, there is considerable consensus as regards the fundamental

role that familial background plays, as much through the provision of variable resources as through the vehicle of educational choice. As Gouvias confirms:

Factors such as ‘curriculum track’ (i.e. route of study), or ‘attendance of private cramming institutes’, underline the influence that the family exercise on the choices made, on the one hand, and on the resources used for ensuring the eventual success, on the other (1998, p.329)

Among the few studies that have been conducted in Greece regarding young people’s educational choice, most of them explore the decision making processes with reference to Higher Education entrance and choice of field of University studies. Papakonstantinou’s study (2003) evinces that the choice of the type of Higher Education Institution constitutes a particularly tough and ever-present concern for both the young people and their families. The educational choice is seen as situated “in an uncertain and vague landscape due to lack of guidance and information” creating conditions of unprecedented “educational panic” (ibid, p.60). Studies exploring the decision-making processes of final year students of Lyceum before taking the National Examinations (Garh, Xristakopoulou and Mylwnas, 1996; Samoilhs, 2001) have shown that the role of family emerges as the most profound factor that shapes the young people choice of studies. The occupational prospects, the social status, along with the students’ interests, capabilities, needs and gender were also identified as having a bearing upon the choice of field for Higher education studies.

Sianou-Kyrgiou (2010) after examining the persisting inequalities in both the access and the distribution in Higher Education claims that choices of the field of studies are heavily influenced by social class and gender. More specifically upper and middle-class participants tended to aim for and choose for ‘elite’ institutions and subjects of studies. By contrast, working-class young people were constrained by a host of factors, among which the uncertain transition to labour market, the lack of economic resources and the geographic distance were found to be the most influential. As the author maintains the restrictions the working-class participants were facing, led them to make “obligatory

choices” (2010, p.35); namely they self-excluded themselves from high-status Higher Education Schools irrespective of their attainment levels and ‘opted’ for the ‘safe’ careers in police force, army and teaching. As this study showed, a gendered pattern of choice was also evident, with women tending to choose fields like education, humanities and social sciences and men opting for technology and engineering.

The afore-mentioned finding is redolent of what another study by Deliyanni-Kouimtzi and Ziogou (1995) revealed as regards the gendered occupational choices that young people in Thessaloniki were accounted to make fifteen years ago. According to these authors “teaching tops the list for girls, and is followed by occupations that predominantly have to do with children, fashion, and home”. As they continue arguing “aspirations are a function of the demonstration and affirmation of femininity and of the tasks and roles traditionally allocated to and performed by women” (1995, p.215).

It is in this context that the migrant families and young people are called to navigate their ways through the educational system. As regards the exploration of the relations between migration, ethnicities and schooling in Greece, it can be said that among a relatively small amount of research conducted, the majority of these studies focuses on the psycho-social processes of adjustment and the attainment levels of pupils with migrant background.

Goudiras (2002) has posited that identity formation and social integration are interlinked and shaped to a great degree by the integration and progress that students with migrant background experience in school. Academic achievement in particular is acknowledged to be one of the most crucial indicators affecting the social integration of young people with migrant background into the Greek society. However, as Govaris and his associates claim “the school integration process of students with immigrant background is rather problematic in the Greek, school system” (2010, p.201). Georgas and Papastylianou (1993) highlighted the low attainment levels of repatriated, Ethnic Greeks from Pontos that pushed them to leave school upon the completion of compulsory education and

enter the labor market as unskilled workers. Other studies have also demonstrated the low achievement of migrant pupils (Sinanidou and Georgh, 2005; Palaiologou and Evaggelou, 2003; Govaris *et al*, 2010) and the inability of educational policies to treat this urgent problem effectively.

With the reference to the school adjustment of migrant children and young people, a study examining the adjustment of Albanian migrants, aged 13-18, by Prelorentzou and Ntalla (2003) showed that 60% of their sample identified themselves as “wanting to be both Albanians and Greek” and “have relations with both Greek and Albanians”, thus taking an adaptive strategy of ‘consonance’. The researchers found that among the most commonly referred sources of emotional stress and concern for the participants were the academic progress and the relationships with their teachers, with the relations with parents and the financial problems following in significance. In their research with Greek and migrant primary pupils Giavrimhs and associates (2003) demonstrated the statistically significant differences found between the two groups in the areas of school achievement and academic self-concept. The pupils with migrant background were identified as having lower self-esteem and more negative perception of their scholastic attainment (see also Govaris *et al*, 2010).

Palaiologou (2007) comparing the adjustment of Greek and migrant primary pupils from the former Soviet Union highlighted the learning and psycho-social difficulties that disproportionately experience the migrant children. As she claims, language difficulties heavily affected their adjustment process since they were not provided with “sufficient opportunities in school to maintain their cultural heritage and mother tongue” (2007, p.107). Palaiologou and Evangelou (2003) posit that pupils of migrant background, both repatriated and foreigner have unequal opportunities to excel academically compared to their Greek peers. The authors make reference to the absence of bilingual programs, the inadequacy of teachers’ training in dealing with diversity in multi-cultural settings and more importantly to the pressures on migrant students to abandon their ethno-cultural identities and assimilate.

After having reviewed a selective number of studies on migrant pupils' relation to schooling, it could be claimed that the majority of them has explored the issues primary pupils face while struggling to adjust in Greek school and society. Furthermore, the young people with migrant background who attend secondary and post-secondary schooling have not received adequate research focus, while the parameters of social class, gender and racism have been under-researched. There is also a scarcity of in-depth, qualitative research that examines the material and discursive context of migrant and Greek young people's identities and educational choices, especially with reference to the transition to post-compulsory education. While research studies in Higher Education have explored the effects of social class on choice-making, the factor of ethnicity and its interactions with social class and gender have not been documented, neither have these studies explored the processes and subtleties through which Greek young people navigate through the blurred post-16, educational landscape.

In this Greek-specific context, positionality, habitus and capitals will be employed as a way of understanding subjectivities, individual educational histories and decision making processes. This will be achieved through analyzing the narrative accounts of educational choices and identities of Greek and migrant young people. Their narratives are thought to be enmeshed in the specificities of the Greek educational landscape and the wider hierarchical relations of power, structured not least along the lines of ethnicity, class and gender. The next chapter will sketch out the setting of the study, the research process followed along with the methodological and epistemological issues that are central to the research design and the interpretation and presentation of the collected material. The limitations of the study will be also discussed.

Chapter 5

THE RESEARCH PROJECT: EPISTEMOLOGY, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Epistemological issues: understanding, interpretation and experience

The epistemological departure point of the study can be located in the ideographic paradigm of interpretivism, as it is further evolved through the influences of *post-structuralism and constructionism*. Having been influenced by theorists such as, Goffman (1959), Bourdieu (1990a; 1993; 1999), Bhaskar (1989), Ricoeur (1980; 1991), Geertz (1973), the current perspective centres firstly on the way that structural, cultural and discursive configurations crosscut and operate to inform social action and secondly on the processes by which structural and cultural elements become instantiated in social agents' mental schemata, narratives and practices. This necessitates the emphasis to be put on the interplay between micro-mechanisms and macro-level workings. Hatcher, drawing on Callinicos states:

since human agency is an irreducible element of social events, a tenable explanation must contain claims about the intentions and beliefs of actors and how they are translated into action (Callinicos, 1987, p. 82). Specifying micro-mechanisms is often necessary for establishing macro-level explanations (1998, p.12)

Having taken the above into consideration, the present study is framed by the goal to *understand* social agents as they experience the social and material parameters of their life and as they make meaning of their experiences. The emphasis on understanding calls for and necessitates the immersion into the minutiae of lived realities as they are

experienced and articulated by the actors themselves. As Bourdieu posits: “one cannot grasp the most profound logic of the social world, unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of an empirical reality” (1993, p.271). These points beg the questions of how is this immersion achieved, if at all, and what is meant by understanding. In the *Weight of the world* Bourdieu provides an eloquent account on these matters:

Attempting to situate oneself in the place the interviewees occupy in the social world in order to understand them as necessarily what they are... is not to effect the phenomenologists 'projection of oneself into the other'. Rather it is to give oneself a generic and genetic comprehension of who these individuals are based on a (theoretical and practical) grasp of the social conditions of which they are product: this means a grasp of the circumstances of life and the social mechanisms that effect the entire category to which any individual belongs... and a grasp of the conditions, inseparably psychological and social, associated with a given position and trajectory in social space. Against the old distinction made by Wilhelm Dilthey, we must posit that understanding and explaining are one (1999, p.613)

In this sense, understanding involves a grasp of the material and psychological conditions that shape the experiences of the individuals, which in turn make them think and speak from a specific point of view. This can be otherwise termed as an attempt to understand and illustrate the meaning-making processes through which social agents come to perceive, construct and make sense of themselves and others. As Bhaskar asserts “meanings cannot be measured, only understood. Hypotheses about them must be expressed in language, and confirmed in dialogue” (1989, p.46).

This leads us back to the propositions of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) and symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969) which despite their conceptual differences, attach central significance to the processes of meaning making and interpretation. In Blumer’s perspective (1969, p.2) the meanings emerge within the

context of social interaction and depend directly on the ways the communication takes its shape in a given temporal and spatial frame. That entails that meanings are not fixed and static but are constantly under revision and reconstruction, in proportion to the change that transforms the conditions that give rise to their existence. In this light, it is plausible to argue that meaning making cannot be constructed in any other way apart in the context of collaborative communication. This interaction inevitably occurs in relation with other interlocutors, who bring in the communicative act their own perceptions, beliefs, norms and values. This raises the matter of the almost umbilical bond that connects meaning-making production and *interpretation* and renders any form of interaction (the research process included) inescapably inter-subjective.

However, this is not to suggest a free-floating individual, with infinite opportunities for making-meaning and boundless resources in constructing a sense of him/herself and others. Inter-action and communicative possibilities are conditioned by structures and discourses pre-formed. Accordingly, action is constrained to a great extent for people living in conditions characterized by scarce economic resources, limited access to the political/public sphere where discourses are being re-fabricated, decisions are being made and policies are being formed. Mouzelis has argued that we should not neglect the fact that “actors, because of their very unequal access to the economic, political and cultural means of production, contribute just as unequally to the construction of social reality” (1995, p. 16).

In particular, the post-structuralist position as couched by Harvey “that all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate” (1989, p.48) can be said to be at the centre of the present study. More specifically the focus on experience can prove to be essential for allowing aspects of the lived realities of young people, who remain silenced, to be heard and listened to. From a Bourdieusian perspective this entails capturing “the knowledge used by those who possess a practical mastery of their world” (Postone *et al*, 1993, p.3).

For any research project the methodological instruments used for garnering the above mentioned practical knowledges and voices, for what is commonly referred to as methods of ‘data’ collection and techniques for analyzing and making sense of them, are of overriding import. Intrinsic to the issue of methodology are: the analytic stance taken when producing ‘data’, when analyzing them, the perception of what counts as ‘data’, the perception of the role of both researcher and research participants. Before embarking upon the analysis of these issues, it is worth citing Geertz’s view on the matter when he maintains that “what we call our data are really our constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (1973, p.9). Tracing out the etymology of the term ‘data’ back to its Latin (datum) and ancient Greek (δεδομένο) origins, one might interestingly realize how its original meaning (something that has been given) has been transformed to denote something that has not been given but has been produced and gleaned from the field. Are we entitled therefore to speak for ‘data’ or rather for material, which does not stand for the constant sociological truth but is a socio-historically produced account of it? The latter perspective is endorsed for the present study, which aims at understanding young people, as they shape their practices, as they make their choices balancing between the constraints and opportunities, as they narrate their identities.

Turning back to the matter of meaning-making, and borrowing McNay’s postulation, it can be argued that “meaning is not inherent to action but is the product of interpretative strategies amongst which narrative is central” (2000, p.95). This point takes us to the issue of the research design, methodology and techniques, and the ways the latter were influenced by theory and in turn shaped the whole perception of the particular research enterprise.

Researching identity and choice within the frame of narrative inquiry

All the above mentioned dimensions led me to consider the qualitative design with a narrative focus as the one that best serves both the underlying theoretical foundations of my project and the questions that it seeks to answer. At the core of the project as it has been already noted lies the young person, as a social actor able to make decisions and take action bounded by the existent constraints and opportunities that structure his/her everyday life, such as the broader socioeconomic context of young people's lives and the institutional context of their schools (Vocational and Comprehensive Lyceum). According to Elliott, in-depth qualitative research that capitalizes on narratives, can prove to be particularly useful in that through providing "a rich descriptive account of how individuals experience the decision-making process itself" and "insight into individuals as decision maker and active agent" (2005, p.123).

The second area of the study concerns the young people's accounts of identities, as the latter are negotiated and marked by the way that the social agents experience and make sense of their social class membership, ethnicity and gender (albeit important, other aspects of identities, such as colour, religion, age, sexuality, were not planned to be under scrutiny). It is pertinent at this point to elaborate on the epistemological affinities between narrative, identity and experience. In fact Georgakopoulou (2006) captures the two commonly used perspectives on narrative as revolving around these nodal points:

first, the significance of narrative as a privileged mode for making sense of self and others and as such a unique point of entry into questions of identity (see chapters in Brockmeier and Carbaugh, 2001); second, the relationship between narrative and experience which according to many, translates into the compelling idea that we actually perceive the world in narrative form (e.g. Carr, 1986; MacIntyre, 1981) (Georgakopoulou, 2006, p.236)

The three aforementioned foci of the research study on identity, experience and choice-making led me to the consideration of narrative as the cardinal point of the thesis. In particular, accounts provided by actors in the form of narrative are, as Anthias rightly points, "the most accessible for social researchers who are interested in the ways

individuals understand and interpret their place in the world” (2002, p.498). These narrative accounts are stories about identifications and practices; they are the means through which individuals comprehend themselves and others and perform themselves both to themselves and to others (Anthias, 2002; Lawler, 2002). This relation between narrative and identities lies at the core of what Somers and Gibson (1994) call as “narrative constitutions of identities”. Seen from this perspective identity is “grounded in experience and temporality and has coherence without being static and fixed” (Elliott, 2005, p.124). In this frame “the narrative approach allows for a more active, processual view of identity that shifts over time and is more context dependent” (ibid, p.131).

This point links with the significant issue of the relation between individual narratives and ‘public’/grand narratives. The individual narratives are socially constituted in two ways: firstly, through the cultural discourses and the stock of stories that an individual can draw upon and secondly, through the audience that one addresses and interacts with. Anthias refers more extensively to the socio-genetic and intersubjective genealogy of narrative, as emanating from discourses and stories handed down from families, and its role in organizing experience:

These stories draw on and are therefore derived from collective stories told around us from discourses, representations and normative systems, as well as stories told within our families and by a range of significant others. At the same time, these stories are ways in which we try to order and organize our experiences in terms of certain conventional norms or rules. These relate to the type of narration that is deemed appropriate in a particular context and in relation to a particular audience – imagined or real. Therefore, these stories have both a conventional and strong inter-subjective component (2002, p.499)

The aim of the present study to explore the interplay of educational choices, identity formations and imagined futures of young people constituted the main reason for selecting what is termed by Connely and Clandinin as ‘narrative inquiry’ (1990; 2000).

This form of inquiry is founded on the postulate that “lives are composed, recomposed, told, retold and lived out in storied ways on storied landscapes” (Clandinin *et al.* 2010, p.82). Furthermore, narrative inquiry constitutes “a way of understanding experience” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.20) as a storied phenomenon. As these authors posit:

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories...Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006, p. 477)

It needs to be noted that narrative in the present study is seen “as both as the phenomena under study and method of study” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.4). This involves thinking narratively when entering into “research relationships” but also when writing “storied accounts of educational lives” (*ibid.*). Thinking narratively requires three focal dimensions of narrative inquiry to be attended to, that is:

Temporality (past, present, future), sociality (the dialectic between inner and outer, the personal and social), and place (the concrete physicality of the place or places in which experiences are lived out and told) (Clandinin *et al.* 2010, p.82)

Taking into account temporality, sociality and place, necessitates closely following individuals as they position themselves in a “continuum- imagined now, some imagined past or some imagined future” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.2). More importantly it entails conceptualizing experience as an embodied narrative that oscillates between continuity and change, between the social and the personal, between the physical and the storied places. In this way narrative enables seeing “different and sometimes

contradictory layers of meaning, to bring to them into useful dialogue with each other, and to understand more about individual and social change” (Squire, Andrews, Tamboukou, 2008, p.1)

Across similar lines Ricouer (1980) conceptualized narrative as a story with a distinctive plot (see also Polkinghorne, 1988). By plot he defined “the intelligible whole that governs a succession of events in any story”, and as he continued by arguing “a story is made out of events to the extent that plot makes events into a story” (1980, p.171). For Connelly and Clandinin story is “a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477). However this is not to assume a singular storyteller (and hearer). By contrast “multiple, disunified subjectivities” are implicated in story production and understanding, to the degree that it is maintained that “the storyteller does not tell the story, so much as she/he is told by it” (Squire, Andrews, Tamboukou, 2008, p.3).

Active Interviewing: co-constructing meaning and narrative production

The research intentions were regarded to be best served by a multi-method design which was mainly founded upon “active interviews” (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997) and complemented by informal conversations and observation. Interviewing can be said to constitute the most widely used method of collecting material in contemporary social qualitative inquiry and one of the most commonly used by narrative inquirers, not least because they allow the discursive space for narrative accounts to emerge.

Interviewing in its more or less formal form, operating in a private, every-day setting or in a public one, has become one of the defining practices of our society, to the extent that the latter has been called by Silverman “an interview society” (Silverman, 1993, 19). In everyday life’s meaningful conversations, questions and replies are rephrased in the quest of communally apprehended concepts and meanings. As a research method, interview has been conceptualized among others as a social interaction, a conversation in which the meaning of both answers and questions is jointly constructed (Mishler, 1986). Alternatively, as Mason (1996, p.46) puts it, the researcher can “treat the interview as a site of knowledge construction, and the interviewee and interviewer as co-participants in the process”, stance which transforms the whole theoretical and empirical enterprise of interview.

Like all social interlocations, interviews do not take place in a socio-historical void; rather they are inevitably rooted in certain socio-cultural arenas and embedded in ad-hoc, local interactional contexts. Gubrium and Holstein point out that interviewers and interviewees are “seen as actively and unavoidably engaged in the interactional co-construction of the interview’s content” (2002, p.15). Adding more to that, the identity positions of the interlocutors are being deeply implicated in the shaping of the interaction, of meaning-making processes and finally of what counts as ‘data’. In similar vein, Rapley states that:

The ‘data’ obtained are highly dependent on and emerge from the specific local interactional context and this local interactional context is produced in and through the talk and concomitant identity work of the interviewer and the interviewee (2001, pp.316-7)

The above perspectives point to the interactional, context-specific and constructionist role of interviewing. In this frame the interview cannot be considered as a neutral practice of inquiry that is denuded of any possible subjective elements. On the contrary, interview itself is “a form of interpretive practice involving respondent and interviewer as they articulate ongoing interpretive structures, resources and orientations” (Holstein

and Gubrium, 1997, p.121). From this “active conception of the interview” (p.122), the participants are invested “with a substantial repertoire of interpretive methods and stock of experiential materials... of interpretive capabilities that must be activated, stimulated and cultivated” (ibid). Along this line the role of the researcher, who employs the practice of ‘active interview’ is to create a communicative environment that facilitates and stimulates the participants’ construction of meanings, relevant and focused but not over-determined by the issues under study. As Holstein and Gubrium posit “neither elaborate narratives nor one word replies emerge without provocation. The active interviewer’s role is to incite respondents’ answers, *virtually activating narrative production*” (1997, p.123) [emphasis in the original].

Interview therefore becomes a social interlocution jointly constructed by both researcher and participant, aiming at the production of narratives that “are being reworked in the research itself” (Lawler, 2002, p.254). However, if interview and narrative are seen in this light what are the implications for analysis? One may argue that once again the matter and possibility of bias is raised. It is apt to borrow Holstein and Gubrium’s argument at this point who claim that this criticism is pertinent and bias is a meaningful notion indeed, only “if the subject is a preformed, informational commodity that the interview process might somehow taint” (1997, p.126). As it has been analyzed already, this cannot hold true since the interview talk is seen as a product of social interaction, in which all the parts involved, researcher and participants, “are inevitably involved in making meaning” (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997, p.126). In other words, Lawler posits that:

*The kinds of questions asked, the whole direction of the research, will to some extent influence the kinds of narrative research subjects produce in the research itself, as will the location of the researchers themselves. Again, the issue here is **not** one of ‘bias’ or ‘distortion’, but one of the **inevitability** of interpretation and reinterpretation* (2002, p.254) [emphasis in the original]

As regards the present study, three additional and interconnected dimensions of the produced narratives assume further significance and frame the goals of the analysis. Firstly, that young people use discursive resources which pre-exist any communicative situation and can be viewed as a body of prevailing understandings, cumulative ideas, firmed associations and suppositions that frame and structure the narrative. Secondly, that narrative is constrained by social norms and myths that shape what is commonly held as expected, normal and desirable to be enunciated. This point leads to the third dimension of the narrative as a performative and strategic act through which individuals present themselves to themselves and to the interviewer (Goffman, 1959). In this frame the analytic goal was to demonstrate with reference to passages of participants' talk, the processes of meaning-making production while specifying the discursive resources used and connecting them with the context that structures the making of meanings in narrative.

Having endorsed the above perspective, the interview material has been seen as a social product, deeply situated both in the specific interactional context and in the socio-cultural milieu, within which the co-participants live and interact. This entails that another fundamental goal of the analysis was to "show how what is being said relates to the experiences and the lives being studied" (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997, p.127). Being in line with Fontana's position the emphasis was directed "to the *hows*, that is, to try to understand the biographical, contextual, historical, and institutional elements that are brought to the interview and used by both parties" (2002, p.166). In other words, the analytic aim was to establish and explicate the links between the meanings that individuals with different backgrounds, personal and family histories, identities and future envisioning make and the interactional context within which the whole research process takes place.

Furthermore, the participants' interview talk and the produced narratives in the present study have not been regarded as a kind of "reality report" (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995) that allows access to the way things "really is". Even if there is such a thing as "the

reality”, this is to be approached only through multiple “value windows” (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). In other words, as Rapley concisely puts it “interviewees’ talk is never a ‘reality report’, never merely a transparent window on life outside the interview” (Rapley, 2006, p.20).

From interview transcripts to narrative research texts

It is worth highlighting from the outset that the immersion in the ‘data’, a sine-qua-non stage prior to any analysis, meant that listening, transcribing, re-listening, re-transcribing and re-reading the interview transcripts were essential steps during the engagement with the material collected through interviewing. The analysis initially aimed at identifying patterns and eliciting themes and discourses which were emerging from the interview ‘data’ and which were recurrent throughout a number of interviews.

After following this approach to analysis it soon became evident that young people and the intricacies of their storied experiences, their situated identifications and positionalities, started to lose their ‘wholeness’ and disintegrate into textual fragments. As McCormack argues from a similar perspective:

In the traditional approach a transcript is fractured into smaller segments of text (codes) and then recombined into themes which move across stories, across people, and across contexts, to be fitted into a researcher pre-determined framework. Through this cutting up process ‘the discrete, separate and different individuals [interviewed] are gradually lost’ (Mauthner and Doucet 1998: 138) and the complexity of their everyday lives simplified (McCormack, 2004, pp.231-232)

Writing the research texts in the form of thematic segments has been considered not to allow the space for each of the narratives to emerge as ‘wholes’, where histories, trajectories and future envisioning meet and entwine. Rather, it was thought to lead to the compartmentalization of the accounts that young people provided. Conversely, I shared Mello’s argument that “using cohesive narrative sections, or even stories in their entirety, allows the researcher to preserve the integrity of the narrative while at the same time offering greater opportunities for understanding” (Mello, 2002, p.241).

As a result and after going through a process of search for and experimentation with the form (see also Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) of the research text, I crystallized on the present format which has at its centre the storied experiences and narratives of young people. This was mainly achieved through following a tripartite approach to transforming qualitative material which, as Wolcott (1994) outlined it, entailed description, analysis and interpretation. My analytic stance was further influenced by Clandinin and Connelly’s work who, drawing upon Chatman’s (1990) take on narrative analysis, set description, narrative and argument as the three main building blocks which make up and synthesize narrative texts. In more detail they posit that:

Parts of our research text can be composed of rich descriptions of people, places and things; other parts can be composed of carefully constructed arguments that argue for a certain understanding of the relations among people, places, and things; and still others can be richly textured narratives of the people situated in place, time, scene, and plot (2000, p.155)

It seems to be widely accepted that narrative research “offers no automatic or starting points [...]no overall rules about suitable materials or modes of investigation” (Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou, 2008, p.1). It does not provide with definite answers as to “whether to analyse stories’ particularity or generality; or what epistemological significance to attach to narratives” (ibid). Despite the conflicting approaches, there appears to be some degree of consensus that

“like other qualitative methods, narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability, and generalizability” (Connely and Clandinin 1990, p.7). Instead it is proposed that narratives should have “apparency”, along with “transferability” as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1989). Moreover, criteria like “explanatory and invitational quality”, “authenticity”, “adequacy” and “plausibility” have been also suggested by Clandinin and Connely for the conduct of narrative inquiry (2000, p.185).

From a similar perspective, Skeggs (1997), while drawing from Marxist and feminist critiques, proposes a different conceptualization of the term validity which she also re-focuses on plausibility, along with coherence, rigor and responsibility. In her words “a valid account provides the most plausible explanation for the phenomena studied... the analysis can be evaluated as rigorous and responsible and the account given substantial and satisfactory” (1997, p.32). Objectivity, on the other hand, comes to be equated with the “apparency” mentioned earlier, by which is meant that the processes of the production of research “are made apparent and accountable... through the situating of knowledges” (ibid). This entails and necessitates the acknowledgement of the import of subjectivity before any claim to objective knowledge making can be made. As Skeggs contends, “objectivity becomes the means, by which connections are made between different knowing subjects who are always located” (ibid, pp.33-34).

While making links and establishing connections is a crucial task for any researcher working with qualitative material, as Connely and Clandinin underline (1990) the principle or “illusion of causality” cannot be employed as the guiding model of the writing of narratives. The latter instead can be written through having the “sense of the whole” as a compass. They maintain that this poses a particularly difficult challenge for narrative inquirers, who are called to find a fine balance between delving on one hand into the particulars of people’s stories and retaining this sense of the whole on the other. In their words:

Narratives are not adequately written according to a model of cause and effect but according to the explanations gleaned from the overall narrative...When done properly, one does not feel lost in minutia but always has a sense of the whole. Unfortunately, this presents a dilemma in the writing because one needs to get down to concrete experiential detail. How to adjudicate between the whole and the detail at each moment of the writing is a difficult task for the writer of narrative (1990, p.7)

Treading this fine line between immersing into the concrete subtleties of young people stories, while retaining a ‘sense of the whole’ was one of the challenges encountered. In addition, moving back and forth between the personal and the social, simultaneously thinking along the past, present and future and doing so in the diverse localities, physical and storied, where the narrative accounts were taken place, was a difficulty I wrestled with at every moment of the writing. More than that, the economics of social class and migration, the politics of ethnicity, the workings of families and the mediation of education, all had to be melded and fused in the final narrative text.

Another difficulty inherent in the task of writing narratives relates to the apparent, albeit deceptive, stillness and completeness of the final text. Conversely, it is argued that sketching descriptions, making links, constructing arguments and accounting young people’s storied experiences are all based on tentativeness, temporality and embeddedness. This renders the whole enterprise of narratives to be seen according to Georgakopoulou “as ongoing projects in which improvisation, contingency, contradictions and fragmentation are equally – if not more – plausible and worthy of investigation as coherence, structure and totality” (2006, p.254). Essentially, the narratives presented and the explanations offered here are provisional and incomplete. They are in Ball’s terms “snapshots of lives in progress” (Ball et al, 2000, p.10) which strive to convey a sense of open-endedness and call for re-storying and re-interpretation.

The research study: Setting and participants

The guiding research questions revolve around the issues of identity-formation and educational choices made by students at the *branching* (options of vocational and comprehensive Lyceum) *and transitional point* (end of upper secondary education) in their educational trajectories. With respect to the field of the study, I focused on two schools, one Vocational and one Comprehensive Lyceum. The former is situated in a suburb and the latter in the city-centre of Thessaloniki. Thessaloniki constitutes the industrial centre of Northern Greece and has the second largest population in the country, almost two millions. Furthermore, it has the second biggest concentration of migrants, after the Attica region, fact that has altered dramatically the socio-demographic profile of the city during the last two decades. The inner-city along with the west parts of the greater city area of Thessaloniki constitute the spaces that attracted the majority of the migrant population, consisting mainly of white European nationals and more specifically Albanians, Georgians, Bulgarians and Rumanians. The above facts render the city a potentially fruitful setting for exploring the challenges that post-industrialist, de facto multi-cultural socio-spaces face.

Negotiating and securing access to the schools proved to be an onerous and time-consuming process. After having contacted four schools and discussed about the goals of the research with the head-teachers, the responses I received were all negative. The basis of the principals' argumentation was revolving around the "sensitive and difficult issues" that the study was perceived to deal with. As one of the principals claimed "these are difficult matters. How am I going ask foreigner students to participate? The Albanians are ashamed for being Albanians; they do not want to admit it". Another head-teacher declined access arguing that the sensitivity of these issues, made him cautious as regards the negative effects that the study might have on the psychological state of the young people and the relations with their peers.

Finally two principals agreed their schools to participating in the study. In cooperation with them, we asked to have a group discussion with all the young people attending the pre-final grade, looking for ten participants from each school. During this initial conversation the goals of the study were shared with the young people, while a general discussion was held around the issues of migration and educational choice. The positive reception on behalf of the students was manifested not least in their vivid interest on the topics discussed, their eagerness to participate in the study, their enthusiasm and talkativeness. Lastly, twenty-three young people, aged 17-19, attending the pre-final grade of Comprehensive and Vocational Lyceum formed two groups in each school across the line of their migrant and non-migrant status. This process resulted in the formation of two groups within the Comprehensive Lyceum group and another two groups in the respective Vocational Lyceum. In the Comprehensive the first group consisted of six young Greeks, three male and three female and the second of two Albanian females, one Armenian-Georgian female, one Palestinian female and two Georgian males. In the Vocational the first group was made of five Greeks, four male and one female while the second group of five Albanian males and one Albanian female. The ethnicity attributed to the young people was the one identified by themselves during the interviews.

As regards the migrant young people, the preconditions for their participation in the study were the five years minimum of stay in Greece and their fluency in the Greek language. Both of the schools' head-teachers were particularly helpful in identifying who of the young people met the criteria and could participate in the study. It has to be noted that the gender and ethnic balance of the groups were reflected the total student population with the women being under-represented in the Vocational Lyceum (20%), while the Albanian males were over-represented in the same school (40%). The percentages and the patterns of participation in Comprehensive school was the reverse, with women being the almost the 60% of the population, and the migrant males under-represented (5%). It was also the aim of the research to form the Greek and migrant

groups with young people of all achievement levels, as this has been attested by their school records, and equivalent when possible.

Project name	Gender	Ethnicity	Lyceum type
Alexandra	Female	Greek	Comprehensive
Ariadni	Female	Greek	Comprehensive
Helen	Female	Greek	Comprehensive
Panos	Male	Greek	Comprehensive
Thanos	Male	Greek	Comprehensive
Stephen	Male	Greek	Comprehensive
Vicky	Male	Albanian	Comprehensive
Eleanor	Female	Albanian	Comprehensive
Nur	Female	Palestinian	Comprehensive
Irene	Female	Armenian-Georgian	Comprehensive
Dimitri	Male	Georgian	Comprehensive
Nickolas	Male	Georgian	Comprehensive
Phillip	Male	Albanian	Vocational
Thomas	Male	Albanian	Vocational
Paul	Female	Albanian	Vocational
Nick	Male	Albanian	Vocational
Alexander	Male	Albanian	Vocational
Elise	Female	Albanian	Vocational
John	Male	Greek	Vocational
Jim	Male	Greek	Vocational
Nathan	Male	Greek	Vocational
George	Male	Greek	Vocational
Stephanie	Female	Greek	Vocational

Table 2. Gender, ethnicity and type of Lyceum

The fieldwork started in December of 2007 and lasted until the late November of 2008. The nature of the research questions led me to employ in-depth-interviewing as the main tool for gaining the material required. Complementarily and as a way of gaining additional insight into the matters at hand, I started the fieldwork through observing schools' formal and informal activities and I made informal conversations with young people and educators. In total over one hundred hours were spent in observing: schools' celebrations and preparations for celebrations for commemorating the Greek Independence Revolution of March, 1821 and the resistance to Nazis' occupation in October, 1940; film screenings; outdoor activities and canteen conversations.

Furthermore, discussions with the teachers were indicative of the distinct "organizational habituses" (McDonough, 1997) prevailing in the Vocational and Comprehensive Lyceum. It is worth noting that among the recurring themes in the conversations with educators in Comprehensive Lyceum were the high premium put on high academic achievement, the difficulties they had in teaching linguistically and culturally diverse classes, the degree of helplessness they experienced as regards the every-day challenges they were facing. The presence of migrant young people was commonly referred to as a "problem" that they had to cope with, yet they felt as ill-equipped to do so. As a teacher of Greek literature in the Comprehensive Lyceum stated "we have many students coming from Albania, Russia; many of them form cliques and fight with each other. For some of them I ponder how they come to be here given their achievement" [from the field notes]

In the Vocational Lyceum, teachers were speaking of the priority of the school in facilitating young people to learn the skills and the 'crafts' they have chosen. Young people were seen by most of the teachers as exhibiting interpersonal qualities like sociability, kindness yet lacking the academic motivation and interest in studying. As the head-teacher of the school has argued "we have nice young people here; they are kind, but all you get is niceness and politeness; they do not study; they are bored" [from the field notes]. The gender imbalance in the Vocational Lyceum's student population was

also a source of concern by some educators. These teachers referred to the need for challenging the discourses considered to be circulated regarding the distinct occupational roles of the two sexes. This was the main reason for them that so few women choose to attend the Vocational Lyceum. It is worth mentioning, that the Physical Education teacher organized a screening of *Billy Elliot* (2000), a movie about a British young boy who despite the prevalent gender-specific stereotypes aspires a career of a dancer. This film was regarded by the teacher as potentially sensitizing young people concerning the sexist attitudes that appear to be endemic in the macho male culture across countries.

Turning now to the interviews, the young people were interviewed twice, once during the spring term of 2008 and once during the first term of the academic year 2008/2009. The interviewing was interrupted by periods of observation after the completion of the first stream of interviews. Being away from the field during the schools' summer vacations was needed in order to analyze the material, reflect on the research process and re-form the research questions that guided the second stream of interviews. An emergent design was followed (Cresswell, 2007) according to which the research questions were formed in interaction with the participants and evolving in the course of the study. Forty-six interviews were finally produced and ranging in duration from one hour to two and half hours. They were audio-taped, fully transcribed and then analyzed initially according to thematic analysis using the software NVivo and then as narrative texts.

Researching with young people: ethical considerations and limitations

As a novice researcher conducting a study with and about young people, I acknowledged the importance of being committed to respecting participants' rights and put their well-being in the foreground. I therefore ensured the young people's participation was on the basis of informed consent, freely given by them, without any form of psychological

pressure exerted, while it was also negotiated during the research process. Furthermore, it was made explicit to the young people that they could withdraw at any time they wanted or they could selectively answer the questions posed to them. It has been regarded as vital, the endorsement of an approach through which young peoples' personalities and needs were totally respected and protected, their accounts were highly valued and interviewees themselves were seen as significant contributors in the process. The adopted approach was also framed by the following:

1. guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality to the participants through concealing their identity and possibly distorting their biographical details
2. avoidance of intruding into personal and sensitive issues
3. avoidance of any possible offending or upsetting comment or non-verbal gesture and being "alert to signs of distress or reluctance" (Alderson and Morrow, 2004, p.54)
4. avoidance of discriminatory practices
5. asking their permission to tape record, write notes and publish their statements, in a way that they will not be identified

Moreover the forging of supportive and empowering relations with the young people, was seen as the sine qua non condition for making the process of interview a meaningful interaction for both myself and the young people. This was backed up by the continual effort to establish rapport during both the long informal contacts and discussions and throughout the formal interviews. The young people were also encouraged to express themselves freely and without hesitation. While the importance and great value of their accounts for the outcome of research was repeatedly being emphasized. In addition to the foregoing parameters, the casual style of clothing and the conversational tone sustained throughout the research process appeared to have lessened to some degree the gap endemic in every researcher-participant relationship.

In the concluding part of this chapter a reference has to be made on the limitations of the study, considered along the lines below regarding:

- 1) the educational setting of the interviews, which can be regarded as inducing young people to give socially desirable answers and to adjust to the perceived expectations of the researcher
- 2) the ethnic positionality of the interviewer, that is a Greek researcher member of the majority group interviewing migrant young people in the Greek language, can be seen as possibly creating social distance, leading to false assumptions and interpretations and therefore as ‘distorting’ the accounts of the migrant young people under study
- 3) the capability and effectiveness of interviewing for capturing the general relevance of identity issues, as they mattered for young peoples’ experiences and educational choices.

Various scholars have highlighted the complexities and difficulties of interviewing, especially when the participants in interview situations are not sharing the same ethnicity, gender, cultural norms, language and religion. This sort of cross-cultural communication is regarded as “difference-based” as opposed to monocultural communication which is perceived as “similarity-based” (Bennet, 1998). Kim posits that these cultural differences may limit the capacity of interviewer “to encode and decode messages with fidelity” and to interpret underlying assumptions and non-verbal signals (1991, p.266). Across the same line of reasoning Shah contends that “an insider researcher is better positioned to understand responses and to make meaning as a participative activity” compared to an outsider researcher (2004, p.564).

Having acknowledged how intricate these cross-cultural issues (see also Reay, 1996; Archer, 2002 for a discussion) it can be maintained that the arguments of the above mentioned “standpoint view” probably sustain and accentuate the divisive character of the debate while fixing and essentializing the identities of researchers and participants alike. Researchers, as social beings, are limited by their multiple positioning and subjectivities. They carry their own individual and familial histories, their value systems and beliefs irrespectively and beyond their ethnic origin. Francis and Archer postulate,

that even if the approach of “matching ethnicity” is adopted this does not ensure that differences across other lines (social class, gender, religion) would not impede the development of an open and trusting relation (2005, p.93). Reay (1996) also argues that researchers from similar backgrounds might unwittingly or not misinterpret their material in order to match their personal experiences and their pre-formed concepts. This echoes Bourdieu’s perspective on “intellectual bias” according to which the familiarity and proximity of researchers might render particularly difficult for them to “exoticize the domestic” through breaking and stepping out of their “initial relation of intimacy with modes of modes of life and thought ... too familiar” (1988, p. xi).

Given the numerous illuminating and insightful studies that have been conducted by ‘outsider researchers’ it seems reasonable to claim that the production of thick and reflexive descriptions of social life cannot and should not be seen as sort of prerogative possessed solely by ‘insider researchers’ by virtue only of their ethnic background (but also social class and gender positioning). Therefore, research conducted by ‘insider researchers’ is not necessarily less problematic than the one conducted by ‘outsider’ researchers, since “excessive proximity constitutes as much of an obstacle to scientific knowledge as excessive remoteness” (Mills and Gale, 2007, p.443). In the way that assumed ‘cultural differences’ may create distance and reduce the ability of researchers to achieve understanding, familiarity and cultural proximity, by contrast they might also result in a more critically alert approach, since they allow more easily the familiar to become strange.

Regarding the final limitation, I share the Pollock’s and Peshkin’s concerns (2004) of whether direct questions can capture how ethnicity, social class and gender influence student’s lives and trajectories. Questions bluntly put might bring about accounts that capture the irrelevance and unimportance of ethnic, classed and gendered identities for young people or articulate their centrality with remarkable zeal. Although I endorse to some extent this supposition, I don’t consider it as a kind of inherent weakness of the methodological tool of interviewing, as the aforementioned authors did. To be more

precise, seemingly contradictory or ‘inconsistent’ utterances on behalf of young people should not be perceived as such if two crucial, in my opinion, steps are taken: a) a holistic approach of the young people’s identities, not as unitary but as fragmentary and multifaceted, marked by ambivalences and contradictions and b) a holistic analysis of the young people’s narratives, of the constraints, cultural resources and discourses that shape it.

Having in mind that migrant young people might feel uncomfortable, hesitant or less confident because of their alleged ‘otherness’ (linguistic, cultural, religious, social) made me counter the challenge to form a positive, empowering and trusting relation with them even more intensely and responsibly. Additional effort and utmost care was put to facilitate all young participants to overcome potential hesitations and make them feel respected and valued as actively engaged in the research process.

I was completely aware of the possibility that cultural assumptions and stereotypical beliefs can heavily influence the analysis and the presentation of the collected material. I was having alertly in mind that, regardless of any alleged cogency and plausibility of a given analysis, when it comes to issues of ‘race’ and ethnicity, social class and gender, there is always the risk of “unproductive blame dynamics” (Pollock, 2004, p.20) creeping in the study. In addition to that, the trap of further essentializing and pathologizing the groups that young people belong to, reminded me of the real consequences and effects not only for the referent population but for the participants too, as they continue their lives in the majority institutional settings.

These possibilities heightened even more my sense of responsibility and the need to constantly try to be even more reflexive, by the way of examining my “own familiar explanatory habits” (Pollock, 2004, p.20). In this context, arduous efforts were put in order to realize and critically reflect on the ground that I am speaking and writing from; to acknowledge my own situated-ness as a Greek, middle-class woman who has a shifting trajectory and certain trans-national experiences. To be more specific, during the

last four years that I have been living and studying in Scotland, I have been afforded a 'distance' that triggered and enabled the intense realization of how my own subjectivity is being constituted in a play of difference and experience; in relation to the generalized others I carry with me and the 'others' I constantly encounter. This migration process, although voluntary and for educational purposes, still is being lived as a form of uprooting from whatever constitutes the comfort zone of the native language and the unspoken familiarity one feels when being at 'home'. This can be seen as a dynamic process which has differences and similarities with the one the young migrant people are experiencing; which through a dialectical play of external definitions and of a reflexive search of 'who you are' kindles the re-inventing, re-telling and re-writing of the public and personal self-narratives we all live by. Researching and writing on the matters of choices and identities, of belonging and becoming, was for these reasons a deeply, emotionally-laden process, that not only was inevitably shaped by my current positioning and its experiential gravity, but had itself a bearing on how I come to make sense of myself and the stories I bring into the research process.

It needs to be acknowledged that among the potentially problematic points of the study was the moving back and forth from one linguistic code to another, from Greek to English and the vice-versa. Young people's interviews accounts have been subjected to a double bind of translation; one from speech acts into written narratives or "written utterances" in Skegg's terms (1997) and another one from Greek discourse to English discourse, since interviews were conducted in Greek and translated to English. More than that, a host of expressions, emotions, shared confidences and silences were a crucial part of the research experience, yet they were beyond lexical representation.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned limitations, I share Guba and Lincoln's stance that to expect "that it is possible for a human investigator to step outside his or her own humanness...by disregarding one's own values [and] experiences...is to believe in magic" (1988, p.47). Despite the impossibility of entering the field without a battery of values, experiences and pre-formed academic concepts, I was continually trying to face

back on them. This was mainly done through a dialectic conversation with the “dialogical others” (Skeggs, 1997), that is the young people, so as the risk of imposing to the former my concepts and interpretations to be minimized. This was also framed by an attempt to become like the “responsible researchers” that Code (1988) describes as those who:

Look for the fullest possible explanations to understand the situations at hand; they recognize their implicatedness in the production of knowledge and claim responsibility for it (rather than claiming it that magically produced). It involves understanding things, rather than adhering to received theoretical wisdom and fashions (Code, 1988 cited in Skeggs, 1997, p.30)

The abovementioned contextual, theoretical, discursive and methodological dimensions locate the situated-ness of both the researcher and of the interpretation of young people’s narrative accounts of identities and educational choices that follows.

Chapter 6

GREEK YOUNG PEOPLE AND COMPREHENSIVE LYCEUM CHOICE

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the complex ways in which the young peoples' self-narratives are crosscut by their "learner identities" (Weil, 1986) to form a web of decisions and their envisioning of the future. It analyses the narrative accounts of six Greek young people attending one inner-city Comprehensive Lyceum. As it has been already noted Comprehensive Lyceum constitutes one of the two available options for post-16, post- compulsory schooling with the other being the Vocational type of Lyceum. Attention will be placed on the narratives young participants provide about their sense of self, their trajectory through the educational field and their future envisioning. The emphasis will lie upon the exploration of the dynamic decision making processes concerning firstly the choice of the type of Lyceum at the transitional point of completion of compulsory schooling along with the choice of module. The latter concerns the theoretical, positive or technological stream of study that qualifies young people to take the respective type of National Examinations for Higher Education entrance. In this frame their schooling experiences will be explored along with their occupational and educational expectations and the confluence of factors related with the shaping power of the so-called 'significant others', namely parents, peers and teachers.

The analysis begins with the narratives of three female students, Alexandra, Ariadni and Helen and continues with the narratives of three male students, Panos, Stephen and Thanos. The first four are high-achievers while Stephen and Thanos had average and below average attainment levels during their school years,

To turn to the participants' accounts, **Alexandra** is a girl of 17 and comes from a family of lower middle-class background. Her mother works as a clerk in a small business and her father is a fireman. Neither have a University degree. Starting now to flesh out Alexandra's narrative, it can be argued that she speaks of herself mainly along the lines

of her personal character and her future professional aspirations. She attaches particular emphasis on her family for shaping who she considers herself to be. Furthermore, she makes reference to her ethnic identification as Greek and to her intense sense of national pride. As the following excerpt illuminates:

The most important thing for humans is their character; I would therefore say that the character I have makes me whom I am [pause] Also important for whom I am, is the profession that I will follow in the future and of course the family in which I grew up . I believe that my parents made me who I am now; this is due to my parents [pause] I sometimes think that I am proud for being Greek; this is very fundamental to me and I feel it quite intensely sometimes. I love my country and I am proud of its history and I honour all those who fought for us in order to be able to live freely now

When further exploring the issue of what being Greek means to young Alexandra, she refers to the amalgam interweaved by “language, religion and common historic past” and the living force of mores and customs that in her perspective differentiate a given country from another and in specific make Greeks who they are. To the historic and diachronic dimensions of her account of the personal meaning attached to Greek-ness, a synchronic one is added when she rather bitterly touches on the current Greek mentality characterized, and even fuelled in her view, by a generalized lack of law-abidingness and anomie:

Nowadays Greeks do things that are not right –of course these sorts of things happen in other countries too but over there strict measures are taken whereas here things are more lenient. How the mentality of Greeks has turned out to be is related I believe with this fact, that there are laws but no one abides by them in our country

Shifting now to issue of her educational route, firstly it needs noting that Alexandra was among the high-achievers of her class all the way through compulsory and post-compulsory schooling. For Alexandra choosing the type of upper-secondary Lyceum

never was really an object of a choice process, because of both her high achievement and her strong determination to enter Higher Education:

I was a good pupil during Gymnasium, I had very high marks and my goal from the beginning was to enter University and that is why I chose this school; I would not want- even if I were a bad student- to have gone to Vocational Lyceum by any means because I would have liked even in this case trying hard to enter University

This quote not only captures the importance of her high academic achievement for choosing Comprehensive Lyceum but also the fundamental link Alexandra makes between attendance of this type of Lyceum and access to Higher Education. The goal-setting for University admittance started as early for her as in Gymnasium, and made it rational for her to reject any possibility of going to Vocational Lyceum, that would not offer a pathway to Higher Education. This factor comes up again later in the interview when Alexandra was probed further upon the link between Vocational Lyceum and Higher Education:

it is not same thing to enter Higher Education after having gone through Comprehensive and the same after having gone through Vocational. If it were the same, everyone would go to Vocational. Again, I would not have gone there, because in general, from what I hear from others who were attending Vocational, it is more a mockery of a school, so to speak, the Vocational Lyceum; they do not do any study, they laugh all the time, they go out of the classroom; hence it is not the same as Comprehensive. The modules are easier because teachers do not put pressure on them so they can do whatever they want. If for instance there was a teacher who was teaching the lesson in the way they teach here, it would have been equally difficult, but teachers do not do it[pause] that is all

What the above exchange illuminates is the negative lenses through which the Vocational Lyceum is viewed. Even if the Vocational pathway grants access to National

Exams and potentially to Higher Education, it is not considered as a legitimate alternative to Comprehensive Lyceum on the grounds of its perceived less academically demanding learning environment. The rationale underlying this line of thinking it would be seen on what the young participant hears from other youths who attend this type of Lyceum.

Alexandra specifically mentions later in the interview the ‘hot’ knowledge (Ball and Vincent, 1998) coming from her mainly male friends attending Vocational Lyceum, who in various discussions they have, appear to say to her: “*all the time I take my backpack I go to school and then I come home and leave it*”. Through this kind of hearsay she forms the idea that Vocational Lyceum is not the type of school where teaching and learning is taken seriously by teachers and pupils. Especially teachers are viewed responsible for the perceived low teaching level and the slackness of discipline. It is interesting to attend on the one hand to the image of teachers who make easier the lives of pupils by allowing them to behave in whichever way they like and on the other hand to the image of disinterested academically pupils carrying aimlessly their school bags. On the basis of these stereotypical images it is not surprising that she refers to Vocational Lyceum as ‘a mockery’ of a school.

In the process of decision making over types of post-compulsory schooling a significant part is played by Alexandra’s parents and especially her mother. Alexandra acknowledges she has regular discussions with her mother concerning the issue of school choice particularly when the significant turning point signalling the end of compulsory education was approaching. However she, like other participants (as it will be showed later) is quite quick in ruling out any sway over her by her mother:

I have been talking all the time with my mother about schools. She also told me that her opinion is to follow Comprehensive and not Vocational Lyceum because it is better for entering University. Of course she did not influence my decision, she said to me ‘It is not up to me to tell you what to choose; choose whatever you want’. I wanted from the beginning to enter University. Since I was small I

wanted to become a teacher and this is what I want now to try for. In general all those things I would like to study, can be studied only in Universities; I do not like anything that I can enter through Vocational Lyceum, such as Higher Technical Institutions

Alexandra through voicing her preference for entering University she sharply distinguishes between this form of Higher Education and the Higher Technical Institutions along with the professional prospects they open, with the latter laying outside the horizons of her envisioned action. What is also implied through the above quote is the parental- and mainly maternal- urge to follow the route that ultimately leads to University. This point brings forward the significant parameter of parental expectations, as seen in the frame of general parental involvement, upon which the analysis will now centre.

Alexandra seems to perceive her parents as being very supportive and expressive in communicating their expectations for her to enter in University, yet without steering her towards a specific professional career. For them it appears to be enough to get the much desired University degree, irrespectively of its specific content. They expect that the academic title and the employment opportunities that it will open, is going to keep at safe distance the disregarded scenario of her daughter becoming a housewife. The parental expectations' frame seems to consist of a stark contrast; firstly, the potential marriage and the housework constitute the negatively projected future path and secondly, the University entrance and the professional employment prospects lie at the positive end of the spectrum. According to Alexandra:

My parents want me to enter University, whichever School that is; they want to see me in University wherever that is. My mother, and my father, but mostly my mother says that 'I believe that you can make it and reach very high'. They do not tell me what to do; they do not tell me for example to become doctor; they tell me to become what I want, but to enter University, to try and make it not to stay

at home and become housewife. They would not like me getting married like other girls do nor staying just at home

The above mentioned passage shed light on the *normative dimension* of the parental involvement, one that as it has been suggested includes the communication of expectations along with exhortations and admonitions. The second dimension of it pertains to the *actualization of parental norms*. In Alexandra's case this takes the form of vigilant monitoring of her relations and activities, regular discussions on every possible matter mostly with her mother, supervising of her school progress, offering help with homework and finally paying for private tutorial lessons:

Whenever I go out my mother wants me to tell her with whom I am and at what time I will be back. She always wants to know where I am and she does not sleep until I am home. I discuss a lot with my mother, I tell her almost everything. I do not discuss with my father so much for I am a bit more embarrassed but with my mother we talk about most things and especially school. Every day they ask me 'have you studied' 'how did it go at school' 'have you been examined'; they ask about everything [smiling]. Until second grade of Gymnasium they have been helping me with homework; sometimes I was telling the lesson to my father or mother for I was feeling better this way. Since then I did everything on my own. Of course I am now attending a private tutorial school and I am taking many private lessons especially in the subjects of my module; I really trust the teacher I have; she tells me which University Schools are good to enter, we talk about these academic staff and I feel more security. My parents spend quite lots of money; but they do not have problem to spend it for my education

Alexandra, as it was noted at the onset, comes from family that can be located in the lower fractions of middle-class, with her parents being occupied in un-skilled and semi-skilled positions but owning their own property. Despite the limited economic capital they have at their disposal, they invest heavily on Alexandra's education as an attempt it could be argued, to offset the lack of academic-related knowledge, their limited know-

how of the field of Higher Education. This role of providing 'hot' knowledge for the Higher Education market is played by Alexandra's tutors who invoke to her a sense of trust and security as regards the University exams and the application procedure that her parents cannot invoke. The parents however struggle to offer to their child as much academic resources as they can, not only through paying for private tutorial lessons but also for other extra-curricular activities such as English lessons, and flute playing lessons.

Alexandra seems to be highly appreciative and indeed indebted by her parents' efforts to smooth her academic progress and enhance her future possibilities. As the passage below illustrates Alexandra voices her gratitude towards her parents but also her determination to study hard in order to avoid becoming like them, struggling everyday financially:

I feel proud of my parents. But as regards the profession, for I see them how much they struggle to make the ends meet, especially my father. I feel inside me that for everything they have offered me I must do something better, I must have a better professional future than they had in order to avoid the same things happening to me as well

The previous quote captures Alexandra's overall stance towards her own future. The only lever available in her view for obtaining social advancement is a University degree. Obtaining an academic title and becoming educated and cultured is not only a vital requirement for finding a job but also for becoming respectable in a socio-cultural context where, in her view, only the educated are esteemed. For her the notion of social and personal success revolves around education, good employment and family:

Someone needs to have a good job, to be educated- for those who are non-educated, as things have come to be, cannot do anything and are not respected at all [pause]and after achieving all these to make a family. Most people say that someone is successful when he has plenty of money but I do not believe that; I do

not believe that money bring happiness, success. Having a degree is more important

The premium Alexandra puts on education is however questioned by acknowledging the all-pervading partisan practices that dominate in the Greek labour market and fracture irrevocably the link between academic title and employment. She poignantly argues:

The more degrees you have the better it is for finding a job, but most of people take the job positions using 'a contact' ['meso']; someone might have a cousin, or uncle who is Minister and who will put them in a position leaving outside others who have better or more degrees. I think that this is not right because other people struggle to take these degrees and also whoever has more knowledge can offer better in a job post than the one who does not

Alexandra after broaching the significant issue of the deficit of meritocracy and the resultant pessimism that this engenders for young people like her concludes her narrative by projecting herself in the expectant future. This envisioning is drawn across the lines that her perceived model of success draws, namely from education, employment, independence and family creation:

After ten years I would have entered University, had a job and stayed on my own and not with my family. I might be engaged – I only want that after twenty eight- I might also have children, now I do not think about it at all but by then I believe I will want that

Turning now to the narrative of **Ariadni**, who is of the same age but contrary to Alexandra comes from a family with both of her parents being professionals and having obtained Higher Education credentials. Her mother is an accountant and runs her own

office and her father is a computer programmer who, after losing his job in a private company, currently helps his wife in running her company.

Ariadni when narrating the sense she is making of herself refers to the social aspects of her identifications. The latter can be conceptualized as a matrix of interpenetrating layers that are concerned with a) her ethnic identification as Greek, who feels pride of her mother country; b) her religious identification as Christian Orthodox, which emerges as a prominent dimension of the evolving understanding of herself; c) her gender identification as a woman with a perceived different way of thinking and prioritising than the one of men, especially as regards career and family related life choices. Finally Ariadni, like aforementioned Alexandra, identifies herself d) as a member of a specific family; a family that is accounted to operate as a provider of all the vital resources and as a precious guide through the life course. In her own words:

Being Greek is very important to me. Everybody should feel proud of their motherland. As Greeks we have common descent, a shared way of life because we live in the same area, and we have common characteristics in the way we speak, we behave, we live. The religion of Greeks, the fact that I am Christian Orthodox is very important too. I would also prefer to marry a Christian Orthodox and my child I would baptize it Christian Orthodox [pause]. That I am a woman is important for whom I am; a man thinks differently as regards his professional decisions, as regards the family and when he wants to make one. Also my family is important to me; you walk through life along with your family; family gives you everything for whatever you do in life. All of these together and each separately play its role

Shifting now to her educational route, Ariadni sees herself as a high-achiever and as always being among the top of her class. It becomes evident through her account that she has not been engaged in a process of choosing between types of post-16 schools when she was at the turning point of the end of compulsory schooling. As she rather

succinctly argues ‘there was not even discussion about that’. The following passage sheds more light on the contours of the ‘non-choice’ process she went through:

My marks were high. I was at the top of my class, therefore there was not in my mind to follow Vocational, there was not even discussion about that, that’s why I came here to Comprehensive. Given my marks I chose this school; if my marks were worse, reasonably I would have given it a thought depending on my achievement; and if I could not cope with the standards of this school I would have gone to Vocational. I think in general that if someone has average achievement, yet he has a goal, to enter University, then he will go to Comprehensive and if he truly sets this goal, he will achieve it

Ariadni’s account indicates a general process of school choice-making that could be characterized pragmatically rational. This involves the weighing out of the achievement levels of a certain student and of the related ability s/he has to cope with the degree of difficulty that Comprehensive Lyceum entails. To these factors is added the significant for its motivational potential, goal-setting for University entrance, which in her perspective can surpass the twofold deterrent of a not high enough attainment on one side and of the exacting curriculum of Comprehensive Lyceum on the other.

At this point the exploration of her friends’ choices was thought useful in unpackaging the potential influences of the wider socio-cultural milieu and the predominantly middle-class information networks she has access to on framing her way of conceptualizing Comprehensive and Vocational schooling.

In more detail, Ariadni’s friends, as she accounts, are attending Comprehensive Lyceum although not all of them have the achievement levels that justify their decisions. As she explains some of them who were of average or below average attainment were considering the possibility of attending Vocational Lyceum ‘but going to Vocational would seem a bit strange to their parents, therefore they chose Comprehensive out of necessity and in case they could not make it through here, then they would have to go to Vocational’. What is underlined by her quote is that her peers were somehow obligated

by their parents to attend Comprehensive Lyceum, fact that brings up another significant dimension of the multi-factorial process of school decision making. The lengthy passage below sheds light on the widespread beliefs and attitudes that lurk behind and uphold the negative lens through which the Vocational schooling is seen:

I have the impression the some parents are afraid of sending their children there. Firstly, because maybe their pride is wounded, for in this way their children's learning level is being declared. Secondly because over there are gathered many young people who are not interested that much in lessons and studying and they have other occupations instead; they are a bit-how to say it- they are more insolent and are not so devoted. Whereas here probably the climate would have an effect on them, the fact that the pupils are quieter, that it would not be as fussy, that the teachers would be stricter with them; here they would adapt differently whereas there they would be freer and they would not pay any attention. Surely here that the level is quite high maybe they could not take in so much of knowledge, possibly because they will not comprehend it. Moreover the parents have phobias that in Vocational Lyceum there are kids who are more liberated. I have heard that they are afraid of drugs, in case their child messes up with drugs, and of the mixing that their child will have there. Maybe for these reasons they urge their children to go to Comprehensive. Probably they would be more proud if they go to Comprehensive for most parents discuss about their child's achievement and they take pride of that in their social circle. Whatever everybody chooses is after all. This is the general picture I have about the two schools

The last excerpt from Ariadni offers the perceived rationale behind the negative stance held by her friends' parents towards the possibility of Vocational Lyceum attendance, which in turn discouraged her peers from attending finally this type of Lyceum. It merits highlighting that the mild phrase 'it would be strange for them' gives its place to the strongly emotive one 'some parents are afraid of sending their children there'. The issue of parental fear is, as it shall be underlined and further analyzed later, a recurring theme

in most of Greek students' narratives. According to Ariadni this expressed parental fear is attributed to the agony of potential inflicting a 'wound' upon the family's pride brought about by the less prestigious Vocational Lyceum attendance by a young family member. This sort of agony is linked with the fact that parental references to their offspring's educational progress features prominently in their agenda of discussions shared with the members of their social circle and constitutes a source of family honour or dishonour.

Ariadni, moreover, continues her attempt to explain her parents' fears by making reference to the problematic educational climate characteristic of the Vocational Lyceum: "*the insolent and the not so devoted*" Vocational students are contrasted to the disciplined and academically inclined Comprehensive attendants, who are monitored by stricter teachers. Finally, another parental 'phobia' has to do with the fact the young people attending Vocational tend to be perceived as "*a bad source of influence*" and avoidable for social mixing, not only because of academic-related matters, but also because they are seen as more prone to be having discipline and drug problems.

It could be maintained that within this frame of thinking about school choice and educational trajectories at large, the individual school attendance is not something that begins from personal preferences and ends in individual outcomes, accompanied by the respective costs or benefits. On the contrary it emerges as a collective, family project with extended consequences for the supposed 'pride' of the family, which seems to be irrevocably linked with the socially valorized, academic path of Comprehensive schooling.

The above observation can be thought to lead to the examination of her own parents' involvement in her educational route and this is the theme to which the analysis will now turn. Is regarded useful before embarking on the exploration of parental views and expectations to refer to Ariadni's own words on the matter:

my parents do not have a specific dream of what I will do; they want me to reach high, not to be stagnant- insofar as I have shown that I can do few things- to go

ahead as much as possible, to enter University and finish a School, to find a good job

The introductory phrase of Ariadni could be characterized as an almost paradoxical one, since the claim that her parents have not voiced a particular goal or ambition for her is immediately followed by an array of expectations. This includes the more generic goal-setting frame that consists of aiming and reaching high and of not letting herself to be in stagnant waters. For the avoidance of the latter entering University and finding a befitted job emerges as the prescribed one-way route.

Moving to the examination of the particulars of parental involvement, it should be initially mentioned that her parents are accounted to have been closely monitoring her educational progress from Primary through Lyceum. They have also taken care of their daughter's extra-curricular activities that included foreign languages and guitar lessons. Moreover, and at the time of both interviews Ariadni was attending lessons in a private tutorial school while she was also taking private, at home, lessons by her mother's very close friend, a Literature teacher. Added to the close supervision and investment in her academic progress, is her parents' strict control over her social interactions; namely the place, the time and the persons with whom Ariadni socializes are all accounted for. Towards that Ariadni seems to hold a rather ambivalent attitude ranging from accusing her parents on the one hand as "*conservative*", for suppressing and curtailing her freedom, to rationalizing and justifying completely her upbringing:

My parents are conservative; they are not liberal at all. There is not too much freedom, in anything, what time I will go out and with whom, what time I will be home, what I am doing at home, everything. They know my friends. Most of times they know where am I and what I do. I think strictness is necessary in various points – it is not that I feel suppressed- just that other young people have more freedom

Turning back again to the matter of educational decision-making , Ariadni refers to the process she went through along with her parents regarding the choice between the three

available modules in Comprehensive Lyceum, namely the *theoretical*, the *positive* and the *technological*. It needs mentioning at this point that although the end of compulsory schooling did not signal a personally significant turning point for Ariadni, the opposite is the case for the choice of module according to which a Lyceum graduate student takes the respective exams for entrance in related to the module University Schools. As the extract indicates, Ariadni points to the family-collective dimension of the choice making process, while defending the role that her personal likings and her own quest for information play:

I had very good grades in theoretical subjects and in Mathematics and I had to choose which module I will follow; my parents did not tell me 'prefer this or the other'; we tried together to see through which module I will have more options for professions, which I like more, respectively of course of my achievement levels in each subject, and we concluded together that I will take the positive module, but in accordance with my own preferences and wishes. I have asked also our family friends, other young people who have entered University and I searched on the internet

The importance attached to the decision over the stream of specialization is immense for the young Ariadni and is attributed to the perceived strong link that connects in a linear manner this early educational choice with the long-term occupational future. The overarching consequences of this choice render it, in Ariadnis' view, quintessentially as a decision about the future. This along with the lack of institutional mechanisms geared at providing information, support and guidance to the students explain the intense anxiety that seems to envelop the choice process at hand. How significant this module-related choice is for Ariadni is also indicated by her agonizing overall tone when referring to it:

When we come first day in Lyceum they give us leaflets for the modules and they demand to fill them in 5 minutes. For the choice about the module is actually what we are going to do not only the rest of our school years but also the rest of

our lives. It is difficult to decide about your future when you are 16. This seems to me weird. If the system stays as it is, at least we have to get more information. I do not know; they have to give us more information and support

To conclude her narrative, it is essential to refer to the future envisioning and to explore further how she perceives herself to be in the years ahead. What seems to feature prominently in her accounts is her identification as a woman who prioritizes family creation and sees herself through the lens of the expectant maternal role. This picture is opposed to the perceived current tendency of women to prioritize career and relegate family to a second rate goal. What is also interesting is that her mother is viewed as the vivid and most immediate example representing the latter since she is accounted to spend more hours in her professional space rather than at home. While Ariadni visualizes herself as performing the fine balancing act of combining family and career, at the same time she explicitly stands in favour of the domestic role, thus distancing herself from her mother as a role model:

Probably most people are interested in making a career and they have left the family at second rate, for later, after 30, and their goal is to make a career. I want to make a career too but I will not leave the family and get married at 35 as some women say. I want to do both at the same time; for both are important. My mother does far too many things. She works very many hours; she has also her children and her home; I would not like becoming like her; her profession might bring much money but I would like to work fewer hours and spend more time at home than at the office

Set in this context it is not surprising that Ariadni's occupational goals are viewed from a perspective of the requirements and responsibilities of the salient and all-pervading for her femininity. She appears to filter down her professional possibilities according to compatibility of the occupation aimed at with the frame and content of maternal role. In more detail, the field of Economics is rejected due to the highly demanding nature of the profession when practiced at the private sector. The public sector emerges as the most

compatible occupational field for a woman with priorities like hers but in the area of Economics the entrance is perceived to be almost impossible because of the increased competition and the nepotism inflecting the recruitment process. The above factors contribute to the crystallization of her occupational expectations and goals to becoming a teacher in secondary or elementary education, a profession that has traditionally been regarded as one of the most suitable for women and the least conflicting with the role of future mother:

I think of becoming a teacher in Secondary schools or in Primary. I like also Economics; my mother works in this field and I would also like to follow that. However in the private sector you work too many hours, you are pressurized; in the Public sector is better, especially for a woman, but now I think you have to take extra exams [ASEP] which are tough. You must have 'a contact', a powerful acquaintance that will take care of putting you in a job post. I do not have a 'contact' [meso] and that makes it difficult [pause. It is unfair. Other young people have gone to University, have done Postgraduate degrees and still do not have a job and others find a job without having done anything. Therefore I think more about becoming a teacher

Helen is another female, high-achieving student. Her father owns a small-scale business and her mother is a full-time housewife who also helps in the family enterprise. Helen constructs herself across the lines of her ethnicity, religion, locality and family membership. She interestingly refers to the wider and to more immediate socio-cultural milieu as exerting significant influencing power in constructing who she makes herself to be: ranging from the legacy that being Greek carries for her along with her Christian-Orthodox religious beliefs, to the lived reality of the specific locality where her family and her group of friends are rooted. The passage quoted below attests to the salient position that these collective identifications enjoy in Helen's account

There are many things that make me who I am; that I am Greek; my religion and my family have influenced me very much but perhaps also the whole environment, the fact that I live where I live and my friends. I think it is mainly religion and family, but all these are happening unconsciously, you do not realize that these things are influencing you

In an attempt to unpack how she conceptualizes her own sense of Greek-ness, she speaks of the notion of 'Hellenism' and argues for its historicity, its entanglement with religion and its diasporic character. For Helen, in her account of Greek-ness the blood ties and the heredity give place to legacy:

It is all the history, the civilization, the religion, the language, the ideals [pause] Usually Hellenism goes hand with hand with [Christian] Orthodoxy, meaning that religion goes in the middle [...] Hellenism is not the state, it is all the people who feel Greek and usually hold Greek citizenship, they live within and out of the borders of Greek state, meaning that Greek migrants of diaspora are also Greek. For someone is Greek not only due to genes, that is heredity, but also due to legacy and that means that we feel as motherland [patrida] not the state where we live but the state where we and our parents were brought up. The roots play important role from a sentimental perspective; if I was born in Germany, for instance, I would have felt Greek [pause] Hellenism brings in mind also History, namely whatever Hellenism virtually achieved

When exploring further the contours of what makes a Greek person being Greek, Helen speaks of a distinct mentality, way of living and speaking as drawing the differentiating lines between the Greeks and the others. She gives an elaborate account indicative of the perplexity and the contradictions endemic in writing the personalized ethnic narrative. For putting more flesh into this claim, Helen raises complex issues around equality, difference, and diversity upon which the construction of one's own narrative seem to inescapably impinge. What is of special interest in the excerpt quoted below is the reference to the interactional and situated dimensions of the process of making and

narrating ones' self. It is worth noting that Helen by entering an introductory caveat repudiates any racist beliefs:

In general I regard all people as equal; I don't have racist convictions [pause] I do think we differ, not in merit- because all people are of equal merit and worth- however there is difference; we differ in terms of mentality and style of life and speech. Generally speaking every people have its own characteristics. I don't know how I would have been thinking if I were born elsewhere. Possibly it is the mentality and the way we behave, but also the way they accept you- not accept, to put it better- the way they react towards you; how the other looks at you, gives you a characteristic image of yourself that renders you different in relation to the other, in terms of difference and the other civilizations. Well, I don't know whether if I were born in a different country, I would have the same opinions I have now, maybe not

The point Helen makes about the dialectic play through which personal identifications are constructed in relation to a perceived 'other' whilst differences, at individual and collective level, are being fabricated and internalized merits further attention. As she acutely argues all these constructions are context-dependent and specific to the socio-cultural milieu in which someone, like herself, comes to form their dispositions and world views.

In this frame Helen conceptualizes the close-knit relation between Hellenism and Christian Orthodox religion. She refers to her religious beliefs and practicing as being a significant part of her sense of self, in spite of the limited currency that religion enjoys among her group of peers and the fact that she is encountering criticism for being "behind the times":

Religion is not only the ritual, it is all the rest. It essentially includes many aspects, behaviours, way of life and perhaps the whole climate of one's life and the family too. I think that some people try to tell us that religion is old-fashioned therefore whatever concerns religion, Orthodoxy and the rest, is old-fashioned

[...] For I go to church very often [hesitantly]. With my classmates who know each other well we have discussed about it many times. Maybe some regard it outdated, that is that some consider it as indeed behind the times – ‘are you going to the church every Sunday? - that is outdated’ they say

Shifting now to her narrative of identity as a learner, namely the grid of her educational experiences and perspectives, it needs mentioning that implied in her account is an established image of herself as a high-flier with accordingly high expectations for her studies and her professional future. As being the top achieving student of her class Helen had little to think about when she was at the end of Gymnasium and before the transition to post-compulsory Comprehensive and Vocational schooling.

In her account she makes a strong reference to the type of professions that each post-16 educational option is thought to give access to. She interestingly speaks of a fit between the desirable academic disciplines linked to high-status occupational roles and the type of school that she perceives herself to match with. Moreover the academic environment that Vocational Lyceum provides is accounted to be detrimental to the academic progress of high-achieving students like her. Within the confines of this picture there is no room for ‘out-of-scope’ options, like those provided by Vocational Lyceum. Let’s follow her line of argumentation:

I would not like Vocational Lyceum because the professions are very technical. It is better in Comprehensive; this is the type of school that suits me best as far as the professions are concerned. Of course there is another side in this matter, that the students who do not fare so well go to Vocational [pause] In other words if a good student goes there his level will drop in that school. I thought about it however; I said to my parents that they came to talk to us about that school and my mother says ‘Do you really think of going to Vocational?’ and I say ‘If I liked going there, I would, but I do not like it, I rejected it from the onset’, they knew I would be going to Comprehensive. Moreover with relation, I suppose, to all that

I liked, such as Law, Polytechnics, Medicine, Literature, I could not achieve them via Vocational; therefore, it was out of scope of the ones I like

Another important factor that emerges from her narrative is the institutionalized character that choice takes at the transitional point of entering post-compulsory schooling. This form of narration is one of the very few that pays attention to the minutiae of –it could be said– the embryonic career guidance. Helen’s account is interesting in the point that it chronicles the institutional dimension of this kind of transition-related choice, as aided by a Career Guidance teacher and the formal information provided for the then new branded type of Vocational schooling. As she accounts:

We did the course of ‘School Career Guidance’ then and we talked about it and our teacher said that the most important thing now is whether you choose to go to Comprehensive, Technical or any other course for acquiring skills- I do not know any other choice available to us then. They came to inform us about the Vocational Lyceum for it was the first year that it would operate with that name. I thought about it but I said I would follow Comprehensive

Helen initially presents herself as rationally involved in the ‘institutional ritual’ of choosing between schools, though as she has already accounted she did not really consider it as an alternative. The Vocational option is not suitable for her, which is justified in terms of a matching between the potential professions on offer by each school and the occupational preferences perceived to be fitted for her. The theme of the match between schools and distinct occupational routes is a recurrent one and evident in varying degrees of explicitness and importance in most of the narratives of students attending Comprehensive Lyceum.

For Helen law, polytechnic schools, medicine and literature were among her preferred areas of study while she has currently excluded law and medicine and she is between polytechnic schools, positive sciences, and education schools. It is rather illuminating to quote the passage of her account in which she elaborates her thinking concerning the

formation of her occupational expectations and her crystallized goals and how the latter are bounded by her gendered identity:

We have grown up in a society where men and women are equals, so I have not thought in these terms up until now. Now that I'm thinking about my future, they say that a woman cannot study until 35-40; for example I was thinking to join the army, the military medicine school and I was thinking that I had to move to different places regularly or if I wanted to study medicine it takes you after 30 to finish your specialization. I was thinking about that; that is difficult to link family with this kind of studies. No one puts pressure on me to enter into a specific University School, although unconsciously the opinion of others might influence you because you do not want to disappoint anyone. A University School that I think about now is Physics. I like very much working in a school. During Primary school I wanted to become a teacher; in Gymnasium I wanted to study Literature and then I wanted to become Nuclear Physicist, and Military Doctor. Now, for I like Physics, if I am to choose a subject to teach and stay and work in school, that is Physics

The above extract makes evident the way in which her identification as a woman is shaped by her perception of how marriage and family life interact with and shape her occupational goals. From her consideration to aim at entering in the most selective and sought-after military medicine school, to her crystallized decision to study physics so as to work as a teacher in a school there is a whole gulf replete with cultural norms and socially constructed gender-related expectations. Being more specific, the long period of studies and the regular changes of residence that the prestigious and male-dominated occupation doctor is not thought to be compatible with the prescribed role of woman and future mother. Helen interestingly perceives that there is a time-ceiling for women to complete their studies and exercise a profession that is compatible and can be readily linked with the goal of family creation. As she claims, she does not feel any kind of pressure for following a certain path yet she admits that 'significant others' and their expectations unwittingly impact on the formation of someone's plans. That is the matter

that analysis will now turn to, namely the role of parental involvement in her educational course and future envisioning.

Whereas her parents are accounted as not eager to explicitly steer their daughter towards a specific area of studies and a related occupation, Helen also refers to her mother's admonition to follow an 'easy' occupational route, as befitted to a woman like her:

My parents see that I am confused, for many times I ask them what I shall do and they tell me 'do what you like; it is not up to us to tell you what to do'. My mother tells me to choose, as a woman, an easy job. In general they allow me to choose what I want; they do not want to influence me

Helen spends quite much time for discussing with her parents the aspects of her school life. Both of them appear to be intensely involved with her education, while undertaking distinct responsibilities and roles. In more detail, her housewife mother was responsible for providing help with Helen's homework and having a close eye on all the school matters affecting Helen's progress. Her father's role on the other side included the more formal aspect of involvement, that is by being a member of the Parents and Guardian Association and by regularly visiting her daughter's school to get information about her academic attainment:

We always discuss with my parents about school and these sorts of matters. In the past my mother, who was at home, was helping me in primary school. In Gymnasium I studied on my own unless I wanted to ask something specific. Yet they have been asking all the time-especially my mother- 'what happened today, did the teacher ask you anything?' and now they usually ask me how did I go in the tests. My father was during Primary a member of the Parents and Guardians Association. In Gymnasium and Lyceum he was coming very often to the school because he was really very interested in the opinion my teachers held of me

Furthermore her parents invest heavily in her academic progress through paying for private lessons. She started tutorial lessons in English language at a young age and she is

also having private tutoring ten hours per week in the subjects of the positive module. However Helen refers to her extracurricular activities as being highly and strictly academic-orientated. The pressure for having high achievement, for being a high-flier deterred her from spending time for any other activity non relevant to school. As she rather bitterly accounts she could not learn a music instrument or to be member in some sports' club:

I might have wanted to do more other things but I had abstained due to school work load -maybe I had the time but I thought I could not catch up otherwise. In spite of wanting to do these things, I did not do anything since I entered Gymnasium

Her parents' involvement is not only confined to the education-related matters but extends to a very close monitoring of her social interactions. As in the cases of previously mentioned female participants, Ariadni and Alexandra, Helen admits the strictness characterizing parental supervision, although she perceives it as the rational and 'right' kind of parenting, responsible ultimately for the forming of her character:

In general I was always in good terms with my parents. They know all my friends, they know where I go; I do not leave the house without saying where I go; I tell them that. They never put pressure on me. Ok. Maybe when I was younger I was seeing them strict but now I understand that this is the way it should have been because otherwise my behaviour and my character would probably be different. Should I be in their position, I would do the same. Maybe they managed to shape my behaviour in such a way, so as do now what I must on my own, without being told 'you must do that' or being punished

In concluding Helen's narrative it is essential to make reference to the way she envisages her future. As it was the case for Alexandra and Ariadni, Helen's envisioning revolves around University studies, an occupation that she will give her enjoyment and which is certainly linked to what she studied, and family creation. These three building blocks seem to be at the core of the personal conception of success. The latter is

conceptualized as a process of fulfilling one's dreams stripped of materialistic notions which put the premium on money and status attainment:

I do not have a certain picture of the future, but if I could enter a University School, graduate and enjoy what I will do professionally and if I could maybe combine it with a hobby that I could not do until now. And not just in professional terms but also to make a family when I grow older; then I think I will be successful. It is not success for me to enter and graduate a University but also to enjoy what I will be choosing. Most people link up success with money; someone is successful when manages to earn lots of money, maybe more than he needs and most times irrespectively of how he earned it. I do not have a good relation with money. I want to have enough so as to live decently but I do not think my future profession in this way; I just want to study what I like. Many times success is related with the prestige, with the status that someone has. I think that successful are those who manage to fulfill their dreams, whatever these are

With reference to the feasibility of her goals' fulfillment and her general stance towards the future Helen expresses a deeply ambivalent stance, characterized by an amalgam of optimism and pessimism. On one hand she voices confidence and belief in her own capabilities whilst she maintains that the widely-acknowledged deficit of meritocracy fractures the trust of young citizens like herself and spawns pessimism and disappointment:

As regards the profession, everyone is very pessimistic; everyone is trying to find someone to put them in a position and this for me is a great disappointment because I do not like that at all [with disapproving tone]. And you think that you might get knackered of studying while someone else who did not do anything compared to you to live better than you, to find a better job so you still get knackered for nothing at the end and this is bad. If there was meritocracy I would be very optimistic; so from this point of view I feel disappointed

Helen articulates one of the most fierce and yet acute attack on the wide-spread stance of finding a job through ‘a contact’ [meso], of having “*a good relationship with someone just in order to be sorted out*”. She interestingly recounts an exchange between herself and her parents on this matter insinuating that the latter were endorsing the practice that their daughter so intensely denounces. In her words:

I have said to my parents many times ‘you better know that through ‘a contact’ I will not take any job, I prefer to be unemployed’. I have told them too many times that I am not willing to take the position from someone who might be better than me. It is not just. In the same way that I would not like being treated as such, I would not treat someone else either; I would not do something that I despise

Helen is adamant in respect of not accepting to be sorted out occupationally through ‘a contact’. She adopts a stance which has a reference point not the individualistic good but what she perceives as fairness. While vehemently criticizing the diffused nepotism that thwarts above all the young people’s hopes, she argues that at the root of this pattern lies the all pervading individualism. She attempts to conceptualize the latter not as the pursuit of personal and familial well-being but as an alienating process that deprives human beings of what she reckons to be their quintessential quality, and that is their sociality, their loyalty to the public good:

I think that everybody wants their children to go to a good school and for themselves to earn big salaries; but when they see that they can earn more money and be sorted out better than others[pause] they do not even care about what is best for the country, what is for the public interest- this is true especially for politicians- [pause] Then it comes the point that we say that humans become alienated, that means that they do not care for the common good; when they see that they can make it better than others

Moving now to the cases of male Greek students attending the Comprehensive Lyceum, it might be said that the three following narratives are in a similar lines with the ones mentioned so far but with a few distinctive elements that will be highlighted.

To start with the account of **Panos**, who is aged 17 and comes from an upper-middle class family with both of his parents being University Graduates. His father has an Engineering degree from the oldest and highly prestigious Polytechnic School in Greece and works as a top executive member of a large-scale engineering company. His mother has studied Greek Literature and while she does not have a salaried job, she is heavily involved in voluntary organizations, such as being the President of the regional 'Women's Association', member of the 'Cultural Association' and of 'Parents and Guardians Association'.

Panos's self- narrative revolves around his ethno-national, regional, religious, gender and familial positionalities. He identifies himself as a Greek Athenian, Christian-Orthodox and male while he interestingly points to the significant for him fact of being a member of a family with high educational status:

The first thing is that I am Greek, and in specific that my father comes from Athens, that I am a Christian-Orthodox. These are above all. My parents have a certain education which I also regard a very important factor [pause] I also like that I am male. Women and men are certainly of equal merit but in some respects they think differently; let's say that they complement each other

In an attempt to unpack the way he constructs his notion of Greek-ness, Panos speaks of Hellenism and its historic, linguistic and religious legacy. Along with these, the cultural values of putting the premium on family and friendship are conceived in his perspective as the salient elements that differentiate Greeks from other ethno-national groups. In his words:

it is the homogeny we have as a Hellenic ethnos, our civilization, our religion, our history, our language and values such as the institution of family, which I

consider important, as the friendship. In Greece we have the family above all. We regard it as very important

Shifting now to his educational route and, Panos, alike the aforementioned female participants, accounts himself as a pupil of very high achievement levels ranging from his median score of 19,2 /20 in Gymnasium to 17,5/20 in Comprehensive Lyceum. What features prominently in the pattern of his educational decision making processes is the projection to a wished but vividly emergent occupational trajectory with high socio-economic status following the footsteps of his father, that of becoming an engineer. This constitutes the main factor of choosing Comprehensive Lyceum as the type of suitable post-compulsory schooling, which is also perceived as the only legitimate route to University. As he rather assertively claims:

I simply want to enter polytechnics and become an engineer, so I chose to come to this school from the beginning. From the first grade of Gymnasium this idea to become an Engineer crossed my mind because my father is an Engineer, graduate of the National Metsoveio Polytechnic and I liked his job, I admired my father and I wanted also to become an Engineer

On the other hand, what also needs highlighting is his discursive stance towards Vocational Lyceum and the youths who attend it. Vocational schooling is not regarded by the participant as worth-considering and befitting for him option due to its “bad reputation” and the fact that it is attended by “lazy” young people, uninterested in academic work. In the excerpt below the phrase ‘over there’ might be construed as indicating the distant positioning of himself as opposed to the Vocational Lyceum and its students. Not only are these youths viewed by the participant as unmotivated but also as creators of an “inhumane”, disrupted academic environment:

It did not concern me at all because the Vocational and Technical schools do not have the best of reputations. In Vocational Lyceum the situation is completely different. Over there they go for fun, without backpacks, they put fires in the classroom, the conditions are inhumane. But they are glad with the situation,

they just want to finish and get the Graduation Certificate. Over there go those who are lazy and who do not bother for schoolwork

Taking a distance from the kind of institutional habitus that is perceived to characterize Vocational Lyceum, Panos along with his friends have chosen the Comprehensive Lyceum. In an attempt to look further into his decision-making process he was probed to illustrate the way through which he made up his mind when he was at the turning point of completing compulsory schooling. Panos as the passage quoted above indicates presents himself as being the sole decision-maker, who chooses after having followed a rational and reflective process of observing outer reality, discussing and processing the facts and filtering through his preferences and objectives. He interestingly claims knowledge of “the reality” as regards the two types of schools. As he recounts, his “reality” is accessed (or better constructed) after observation of the situations at hand, discussions with his parents and taking into consideration his future plans. What also merits underlining is his positive assertion that his opinion is of his own, ‘independent’ making, setting aside at the onset and in a rather, it could be said, dismissive manner the potential role of teachers as partners in the process. The parents are acknowledged to have an important role as co-constructors and co-framers of his stance and choice but in an attempt possibly to ‘save his face’ he denies his parents sway over him:

We also did a specific course that I don’t remember how it is called and which informed us about each school. But I knew what the reality was and I had formed my opinion on my own independently of what the teachers might say to me. I was looking at both situations, I had discussed with my parents and I knew what I wanted to do. My parents did not influence me –although if I was telling them that I will follow the Vocational Lyceum, they would certainly object to that

The agonizing attempt on the part of Panos to demonstrate a degree of personal initiative over the shaping of his views and actions in the frame of the educational route is evident also in most of the Greek participants’ narratives. What features saliently in the latter is the high degree of parental involvement, which in Panos’s account specifically emerges

as the sine qua non requirement for smooth adaptation and overall academic advancement:

When you first go to school your parents have to support you because it is a new experience and you can be shocked. Then you are backed up by the resources they provide you, music lessons, tutorial lessons in foreign languages and as you grow up in the school subjects- for as it is known we are taught the module subjects more in Tutorial Schools rather than in schools

Panos makes explicit reference to the indispensability of parental engagement with their offspring's education. As he argues it can be manifested in multifarious ways, as much as a source of emotional support, as of economic capital converted to extra-curricular activities such as music and foreign languages' acquisition to private tutorial lessons, essential in bolstering their children school progress. In Panos's case, his parents have heavily invested in English and German at-home lessons since he was in Primary, while they have also catered for an extra boost to their son's scholastic attainment through paying for private tutorial in school subjects which determine to great extent the achievement of the long-term objective of University entrance. It is worth highlighting at this point that studying engineering emerges as an ingrained ambition on behalf of his parents deep-seated enough that does not seem to be compromised in the light of any possible failure to secure a place in a Greek polytechnic school. In this case an alternative course of action has already been sketched out by participant's parents and that is the well-trodden route of studying abroad, a route that is being followed by large numbers of Greek young people whose families, like Panos', have at their disposal the necessary financial resources to actualize it:

My parents have spent so much money for me, especially for paying private tutorial lessons in English in order to take the degrees early. I have taken all the certificates in English and I am still doing German as second language. I have also done two years guitar lessons but I got a bit bored. I have also started tutorial lessons in the most important school subjects since the second

Gymnasium grade. Now I am doing 12 hours per week in the subjects of the technological module and in Greek language and literature. They want me to study; to enter anywhere into polytechnic University. They discuss about it with several specialists and they search themselves; for example my father tells me 'there is demand for this profession' or 'you should take this module, it is easier'. Alright, it is logical since they care about me to try to find the best solution for their child. In the case I don't enter there, I will go and study abroad and I am not that excited with the idea

The well-established parental expectation for Panos to become an engineer is communicated through regular discussions over his professional prospects, in which his parents bring in and strategically use the persuasive power of other experts' knowledge. It merits special attention the way that his parents' involvement in that matter is experienced and couched by Panos as a quest for the best possible solution for him. The latter could be claimed to be enveloped by the cloak of certainty and rationality, elements that are as much constituent parts as structuring effects of the familial middle-class habitus.

Apart from the material resources that Panos's parents mobilize in order to scaffold his educational progress, the normative dimension of their involvement was also equally essential as Panos acknowledges in the passage quoted above. Added to the transmission of parental expectations are the offering of help with homework; the supervising and monitoring of the study time so as to minimize distractions affecting their child's concentration; and the regular school visits. The parental exhortation towards this direction is well captured by the all too commonly used phrase "*study, study, study*":

My parents were helping me with homework but I did not like it so much because I felt that they were pressurizing me and I demanded to stop doing that and help me only when I need help. I would not say that they are strict, it is just that when they see me many hours in front of the computer they tell me all the time 'study

and study and study', it is a bit nerve-cracking, just that. They come every month to school, once or twice, to ask for my progress; that's really bad [laughing]

The close supervision and tracking of Panos's educational engagement by his parents is complemented by their tight control over his activities and the minutiae of his social mixing. It is worth attending to Panos's conflicting stance towards the pressurizing behavior of his parents, ranging the former from the utter dislike to the whole-hearted appreciation and gratitude. Panos takes a step further to denote the perils that lurk behind the absence of parental care which are exemplified by the danger of becoming a "looser" and of mixing with unsuitable kind of persons. It merits paying attention to is the immoral connotations that this risk of "failure" carries. What in turn guarantees keeping the demonized "failure" at bay is the form of parenting he has been receiving even if the latter is manifested through close control and supervision. In his words:

My parents know my mates, everyone, all my friends. They check all the time where I am, what I do. We may not like now their control but at some point in the future we will appreciate it, for if they did not control us we could have been wantons, mixing with wrong people and meddling with drugs; I might have become a looser in the years ahead. I appreciate it although it gets to my nerves; they yet know that I will do the same to my children because this is rational; the parents must care about their children, and thus it is nice that they care about me

Before embarking on analyzing his future expectations and projections, it needs shedding more light on his schooling experiences and specifically the relationship with his teachers. As it has been hinted at already the opinions expressed by educators regarding the issue of school choice were dismissed by Panos. What underlies his stance is the negative perception of teachers' behavior, characterized by indifference, discouragement, of insufficient support and care. The pedagogical nature of the relation seems for the young Panos to have been irrevocably fractured. He appears to resort to his private tutors who are depicted as exhibiting the qualities that in his view teachers

seem to lack and these are a good treatment, inspiring trust and demonstrating interest and encouragement:

Some teachers are not inspiring trust, they do not treat us well and this gets to your nerves. When you do something right and do not say 'bravo' but when you do something wrong they are telling you off. The way they treat you is not always the proper one. When they do not explain something well, they do not care whether you understood it or not. It was not me who did not understand; it was just that it happened to have problematic teachers – odd thing [facetiously] each of them had their own way of teaching; some they were teaching in a strange way, some others did not explain well and others were reading from the book. In these ways you do not understand- it is better to have a tutor who will explain it better and you will be on your own with someone who treats you nice and cares about you

Panos's narrative comes to an end with the account of his future envisioning. His future self is constructed mainly through the building blocks of Engineering studies, financial independence and familial life. This element was also found across the narratives of the female young people mentioned thus far. The uniqueness of Panos's account consists in the claim he makes to his aspired and aimed at professional distinction. To elaborate on that, Panos expresses his goal to climb up the professional ladder by acquiring a managerial position at the top of a company's hierarchy, having probably his father's career as an archetype. He takes his distance from the mediocrity that earning a medium salary and having a good family, for him symbolizes. By contrast, working for the most prominent companies of his field promises the distinction he always pursues. As he puts it:

I would like to have entered Polytechnic, to have graduated, have own house and car; to be free, not to be dependent on my parents; I may be married –I would not mind that in 15 years ahead. Mainly [I would like] to be sorted out from a financial point of view and be in good family state. I will consider myself

successful if I take a good position and be productive in that job so as to climb up and become Chief Manager or even President. I believe it will not be difficult because my father has a name as an Engineer, he has acquaintances, he cooperates with the top construction companies; therefore I will find a good job somewhere. Otherwise if I do not find in Greece – I do not despond- in this case I will go abroad. I would not like just having a satisfactory salary and a good family. I would like to be distinguished; I always pursue that

It became evident from the excerpt above that Panos vividly visualizes himself as studying and working in the field of Engineering. Thus it could be claimed that he is in the process of forming quite clear yet emerging, occupational identifications. Panos seems rather optimistic about the chances to realize his goal of being employed in a prominent company of his preferred specialization, drawing on the social capital that his father possesses as a distinguished professional of his field. However, the scenario of working abroad is also part of his plan for action in case he will not have the chance for distinction in Greece. The latter can be seen as indicating a lurking sense of insecurity, a modicum of pessimism.

In the margins of his narrative he speaks with disappointment of the nepotism and lack of meritocracy prevailing in the Greek labor market. In spite that these kinds of practices are not judged by him to be “rational” and “right”, he attempts to explain and justify them by putting the premium to the personal, familial or friendship, relations. Facilitating a friend or a relative and by these means preserving the close ties, irrespectively of his or hers worth and qualifications, takes precedence over any notion of meritocracy. There is an amalgam, one might argue, of pragmatism, sentimentalism and group-ism evident in his account; from which the notion of ‘public good’, as it was captured in Helen’s narrative, is substituted by the well-being of the close environment and not the one of abstract “strangers”. As Panos claims:

You need to have ‘a contact’ for anything; to be backed up; to have acquaintances. They promote you because you are acquainted with someone

else; you climb up taking positions without having merit whereas someone who does not have acquaintances stays back. On one side this is not rational; on the other side if I was in a high position and had an acquaintance, I would help him; if he is very close and good friend of mine; everyone would. It is not that it is right but everyone would do it in order not to argue with your friends, to maintain your friendly relations- you do not care about the stranger- you care about your close environment and everyone to be satisfied. At that point I believe all of us will be carried away; if my sister comes and does not have the qualifications; I will do it. There is no reason in that but it is something people do

Turning now to **Stephen**, who comes from a prosperous family that owns a construction company but does not have experience of Higher Education. Through the young man's account becomes evident the prime import attributed to the role of family, which is conceptualized as the determinative socializing force that mediates the construction of ethno-national, religious and political allegiances. The latter are accounted as significant aspects of his evolving self seen as much from the lens of present as from the lens of an emergent future. Such is the centrality assigned to family in his account that he interestingly claims himself to be the "continuation" of his parents' personalities:

The parents are the ones who pass on from generation to generation information related to religion, to ethnicity, to government; information that form what I am and what I will be in the future. I am somehow the continuation of my parents' personalities. I do not think I could ever be something without my parents' help. I believe that each one of us needs our parents' help who are closer to us compared to other people

In an attempt to go deeper into the content of the aforementioned allegiances, Stephen narrates himself across the lines of the legacy of Hellenism, Christian-Orthodox religion and his identification as a male experiencing the privileges of his sex. He makes special reference to the ancient Greek civilization but also to the hardships the Greek ethnos

endured as both exerting a significant bonding power among Greeks within and out of Greek state's territory. The pride that Greek civilization evokes is entwined with the adversities that threatened the Hellenic ethnos and Greek state's existence, continuity and survival as a democratic republic. It is furthermore worth highlighting that he conceptualizes his ethno-national identity in a diachronic and comparative manner, proudly making the link to the classic antiquity but also referring with bitterness to the disappointing present, marked by scandals, cultural stagnation and overall decay:

Every person for his motherland has a special love. My Greek identity is for me the Hellenism and the religion; for Orthodox-Christianity is part of Hellenism. I am proud for being Greek; for the Ancient Greek civilization, that we had philosophers and orators that are universally known. The new era though with the scandals which hold us back as civilization and all this decline and poverty, makes me feel ashamed. I reckon Ancient Greek civilization is what makes us proud and the fact that we have endured four hundred years of occupation, the two World Wars and the more recent dictatorship, junta. You must have special knowledge in order to know what your country has gone through all these years; you must know the history of your country, the modern but also the ancient. Adolescents nowadays know very little on these matters. I also like being a man but I do not put myself as a man above the woman; I hold that we are equals however I receive a better behavior in professional matters; I have more privileges as a man for we see that women still face a hesitant, racist treatment even nowadays

Shifting now to Stephen's educational route, it can be maintained at the onset that Stephen narrates himself as being a pupil of average achievement during compulsory schooling. When at the turning point of completing Gymnasium he decided not to follow Vocational Lyceum but Comprehensive despite that his grades, as he acknowledges, do not 'justify' easily this choice. His rationale seems to be related to his goal to enter a highly prestigious Polytechnic University as opposed to the academic and occupational options that Vocational schooling is thought to give access to. In the passage below

Stephen claims his aspiration to enter University as spurring his decision to follow the more demanding Comprehensive Lyceum and as motivating him to put more effort for achieving his goal:

Despite the fact that my achievement as a Gymnasium pupil was not so good- I marginally passed the first grade of Lyceum last year-, I did not like the specializations that Technical school offers in order to go there. I thus opted for staying here and trying harder so as to enter at some better University School, like Polytechnic, through here; basically for the sake of my future

Exploring further the way he experienced the decision-taking process and the possible factors impinging upon that, Stephen rather assertively argues for the personal making of his post-16 school choice as against any assumed parental or other influence. He appears to garner valuable information concerning the institutional ethos prevailing in Vocational Lyceum from his friends' personal experiences. Based on that form of 'hot' knowledge he juxtaposes the highly regarded academic environment of the Comprehensive Lyceum, with the 'Ancient Greek and other advanced modules', with the lax and the less intellectually stimulating Vocational. As opposed to the fun-seeking attitudes of his friends' who attend this type of Lyceum, he positions himself as someone who casts his eye on his future prospects. In his words:

It was my personal choice; based on my friends' experiences, I would not like having fun in the classroom and so on. Also I know that over there they are not being taught subjects, such as Ancient Greek and other advanced modules. And you hear sometimes 'today we have not done any teaching' and 'five hours per day we are in front of computers browsing on the web'. I do not want these sorts of things. I know that if I went there I would have been a top-class student, whereas here I have to try more. Thus, for me it is better to try here more and enter into better University Departments, for the sake of my future basically

With reference to role of other institutional influences such as the interactions with teachers and the career guidance course, it could be argued that they were of minimal

sway over his decision-making. In more detail the nature of the occupational guidance course is accounted by Stephen as rather trivial, dealing mainly with the technicalities of the distinct for the two types of Lyceum access to Higher Education. Across the same line, the discussions shared with the teachers are perceived to be rather superficial, without delving into the young people's academic and professional aspirations and interests. What seems to feature at the centre-stage of these interactions is the teachers' recommendation to the young pupils to make the choice of post-16 schooling on the basis of their scholastic achievement. This counsel was accompanied by a pleading to the division of labour, according to which specific version of it, not everyone should aim at becoming a 'scientist' but instead those at the lowest ranks of achievement should be channelled to the respective post-compulsory institutional route befitted to them, that of Vocational. Through Stephen's account becomes evident this 'cooling-down' of young people's expectations is executed to great extent by the teachers while it is being bitterly noted that an attentive, caring and individual-centred approach was totally absent:

The discussions we had during the course of School Occupational Guidance were about from which school you can enter into which Higher Education Department and what were the requirements; this was the main thing. The teachers did not ask us something about the future, what we want to become, what kind of interests we have; they have not asked about these things. There is this indifference on teachers' behalf; we ask them something and they leave; they move on. Usually their opinions were all the same; all of them were saying that not all of us can we become scientists and these sorts of things; that some will be needed in other places and that it would be good if those who did not achieve so high marks to go to Vocational. But it was alright [lowering eyes and voice] they did not want to influence us, they were saying their opinions and what is usually happening [pause] It is just that they should take care of us more

In spite of the explicit urge voiced by teachers to all those young people with low and average attainment levels to follow Vocational Lyceum, Stephen found himself sticking to his ambition for Polytechnic University entrance. His goal to study civil or

mechanical engineering was influenced by his parents' expectation for him to obtain a Higher Education degree unlike his brothers. It could be plausibly claimed that the goal of University studies in this frame becomes a family enterprise, which operates as a motivational engine offsetting any negative pressures exerted from the school environment. It has the power of bestowing pride and status upon parents and offspring alike:

I will go for engineering and mechanics which are better University Schools than the ones that you can enter via Vocational Lyceum. The profession I would like more follow is civil engineer. My parents tell me 'do in life what you love, what you like'. They want me to enter University because from my eldest brothers none of them managed to enter; they went to a private college to study sports' journalism and computing. I think that every parent wants to see their child at University; and my parents want to see someone from my family so they will be proud of that

It is essential at this point to go into more detail as regards the way this familial project is set to action in order to be realized. His parents as it has been noted at the beginning do not have University credentials, yet they are in a position to invest time, energy and financial resources in work synergistically to support their son and facilitate his educational progress. This is happening in Stephen's case first and foremost through the mobilization of economic capital but also through the familial and extra-familial social capital. As the extract below depicts, his mother provides help with homework, monitors the study time and generally supervises and encourages the study habits. On the other hand his father does not have the day-to-day direct involvement with the school matters like his mother but he gets involved through having regular discussions with his son as regards his future plans and options. In Stephen's words:

My mother was mainly helping me with the homework because my father was at work; she was helping me so much, especially if I had any particular problem. They were also buying for me supplementary books. Until two years ago I was

sitting along with my mother and we were doing everything together; whatever she knew. It is just that I entered adolescence and I took my distance; I have also the tutorial lessons. My mother pressurizes me but she does not control me; she just says 'sit down and study; do the work for school and for tutorial lessons'; she puts pressure on me. Whereas my father talks to me about the future, what I am going to do and these sorts of things; he therefore with indirect manner tells me that I have to sit down and study, that it is not easy to enter University. He does not ask me 'did you study'; he asks 'what are you going to do in the future; have you thought about that and that'; he does not say anything more

The communication time spent with his parents is considered to have possibly contributed to the alignment of Stephen's and his parents' educational expectations. Towards that direction the deployment of financial capital for paying for rather intense tutorial and at-home lessons played significant part. As Stephen claims acknowledging his parents' investment:

I am doing 12 hours private tutorial lessons per week in the subjects of the positive module, chemistry, physics, algebra, geometry and that costs 600 Euro per month and another 400 Euro they spend just for tutorial at-home lessons in Modern and Ancient Greek.

Another aspect of this process is the exercise of control on behalf of his parents over Stephen's peer network. He recounts the close supervision of his whereabouts by his parents, checking about what, when, where and with whom he is socializing, as a rational act of setting clear limits to the range of his activities:

My parents are not strict; they just set limits that seem rational to me. For instance before going out I let them know where I go; with whom I go. They know all my friends; I go to their homes and they come to ours so they know them well. I do go out on Saturday but I do not stay out late and they will definitely call me [pause] I can do whatever I want but once they are aware that

I did a foolish thing then they will put great pressure on me to the extent of checking me out all the time, what I am doing, where I am going, with whom

It is important to note that members of the family's social network are mobilized to provide their expertise and bolster Stephen's scholastic achievement in order to meet the standards of the Lyceum's demanding curriculum and increase his chances for succeeding in the National Exams. In more detail, Stephen's tutors are close friends of their family and constitute the only teachers that he has developed a positive relation with, discussing openly and sharing with them his thoughts and concerns about modules and future occupational goals. The intimacy of the relation is such that they have an active role in communicating with the school Stephen attends and supervising his attainment: *"Both of my parents work, so they do not come to school so often but they send their friends on their behalf, who are teachers themselves and my tutors, to ask about my progress."*

All the foregoing dimensions could be claimed to exemplify a synergy of all the available forms of capital, economic, social and cultural, working towards the realization of the prideful family project of University entry.

In concluding Stephen's narrative the attention shifts to the way he envisages his future. The young man, like the aforementioned participants, constructs a future account of himself across the lines of Polytechnic studies, a job in engineering and family creation. What deserves attention at this point is the close connection he draws between his future envisioning and his parents' pride. To be more specific, Stephen while voicing explicitly the indebtedness he feels towards his parents, claims that parental contentment lies at the core of his future planning and his notion of personal success:

I would call myself successful if I made my parents proud for that means everything to me; since they have given me everything I want to please them too. I want to enter Polytechnic and then find a job as engineer; after all these I will make a family I suppose, like everyone

As regards the realization of his goals Stephen articulates a deeply pessimist stance, associated not so much with his personal capabilities but with the frustration of a 'blocked' structure of opportunities. Like the rest participants, he refers to a nexus of systemic problems infecting Greek labour market, such as clientelistic practices, partisanship and favouritism , and on the other hand the embryonic private sector of economy, that renders the future possibilities of the young people as dim as to be perceived impossible. The widely-used phrase "generation of 700 Euros" that he quotes, captures the structural impasse which urges young and aspired people like himself to migrate for the 'future-quest':

You cannot easily become successful in Greece this why the most renowned Greeks are abroad; if you do not have 'contacts' [mesa] you cannot do anything in the future; in everything you need 'a contact', someone big, someone powerful ; usually a politician. It is really difficult to find a job here; you might have studied but you will need to find a compulsory job, out of necessity, and not the one you want to do, the one you have studied and you have set the goal to do. Now it is the so-called generation of 700 Euro. The country's future is dim; is tough for young people. This is why when I grow older I want to leave; I want to go abroad. If I get a chance I will leave; I will leave. I think it is a difficult decision but the future lies abroad

Lastly the account of Thanos serves to conclude the narratives of Greek young people attending Comprehensive Lyceum. **Thanos** is a 17-years- old and comes from a family of entrepreneurs operating in the field of tourism. His parents have Higher Education degrees, his father in Economics and his mother in Education but both of them work in the family business. He has two older sisters both studying in University Geosciences and Educational and Social Policy.

Thanos's self-narrative focuses on his ethno-national identification with Hellenism, Christian-Orthodox religion and maleness. What differentiates his positionalities from

the ones of his Greek peers mentioned so far is the salience that friendship enjoys as an aspect of his self-identity:

The fact that I am Greek is important for who am I; Hellenism achieved many things. That I am Christian-Orthodox is important too. I also like being a man; a man can do more things than women. Other people identify themselves with the political party they vote; others with their sports team. For me above all is friendship; I have a friend called John; John has another friend Elias; Elias has Stephen and so on. We are like a team; like a chain. Even if a link is broken the chain continues to exist, it does not break

When accounting for his educational route, he identifies himself as a pupil of average achievement who, like Stephen, struggles to meet the standards of Comprehensive Lyceum he currently attends. It is interesting at this point to explore the process through which he made the choice of this type of upper-secondary schooling at the first place. Starting to unfold the way he went about it, Thanos acknowledges that his parents' influence was of a decisive import when at the transition of completing Gymnasium and having to choose between Comprehensive and Vocational Lyceum. He narrates that he was exhorted by his father not to follow Vocational Lyceum on the basis of his father's fears for alleged risky social mixing in spite of Thanos's proclaimed wish to attend this school:

In the beginning I wanted to go to Vocational Lyceum but my father did not allow me, he was telling not to go and I gave a better thought, because those over there take drugs and smoke weed and so on and my father was scared. I was saying 'I want to go, I want to go' and he was saying no. My father cannot prohibit me [with emphasis] from anything; anything I want, I will do it. He was saying though these things because over there things are not so nice. Then I thought over about it and it was OK; I said to myself that it is better here [pause] it is just that I have to push myself hard

It merits paying attention to the fact that Thanos rejects that it was indeed his father's veto that made him not to follow Vocational Lyceum. On the contrary he presents himself as engaging in a process of pondering over the distinct options for his education and future career that the two types of school are perceived to open. Before exploring this issue further, it should be highlighted that Thanos finally makes a discursive attempt to justify and ultimately endorse his fathers' concerns and stance, admitting that the situation in Vocational Lyceum seems to be not as nice as the one in Comprehensive. In providing more details regarding the basis of his claims, he makes the use of 'hot knowledge' emanating from the insider view of his peers who attend this type of Lyceum:

I know what is going on over there [in Vocational Lyceum]. Things, they say, are tough there as well; it is almost the same as here with the difference that the teachers here are much stricter. On the other hand, is any schoolwork being done over there? I have watched videos that a friend of mine was taking with his mobile phone; they were yelling and doing various things while the teacher was speaking. They are more boisterous the students there, they are not as here. Here we have certain persons like that, and I do not exclude myself. Over there, if a teacher tells them off, they may drive him mad. Over there they think differently than us here

While he starts his account by claiming that the situation in the two schools is almost the same, he later reverses and concludes with an invocation to a perceived 'difference' in thinking between those attending Vocational from those attending Comprehensive. His peers' videos of the classrooms capture messiness and the lack of order. In this picture the Vocational students are stereotypically presented as lacking the required discipline and the teachers as incapable of managing and establishing the classroom order. In his line of argumentation it could be useful to note an implying spatial division indicated by the contrasting rhetorical schema 'over there-here-there' that negates the initial claim attributed to his peers about the almost sameness of the two schools. The repetitive use of this antithetical, discursive schema reflects and further reinforces the presumed gap

distancing the two schools while it classifies the young people attending the respective schools into two distinct categories of unequal worth.

Despite the aforementioned Thanos appears divided as regards the usefulness of the in-school vocational specialization acquired through Vocational schooling. In general terms he seems to have been attracted by the option of acquiring vocational skills before entering further education. However, his stance is tilted towards a lukewarm rejection of the latter possibility since its future use and value is regarded to be dubious. It could be claimed that there are seeds of rationality in his narrative unfolding through a process of weighing the benefits and costs of the two types of post-secondary schooling. To the question what made the option of Vocational school attractive for him he qualifies the following:

Basically I wanted to go there because you take straight away a vocational specialization, but later I thought that taking this sort of specialization would not be of any use, because I do not want a profession from there, and I came straight here. But maybe it would have been better, if I went there and took an initial specialization and then go to study. Here I knew from the beginning that I will go for the Technological module so as to become easier an Engineer. I would like to study Aeronautics Engineering but it requires many exam credits, 17-18000 and it is a very demanding job. I think I have to realize what is that I really want to follow in order to achieve this high exam score

His account can be seen as capturing his overall ambivalence and uncertainty towards his educational and occupational future. Under his contradictory, discursive stance lies his sense of confusion about the feasibility of the professional prospects that his final choice of Comprehensive Lyceum opens up. It can also be noted that Thanos shared an interest in engineering shared with both Stephen and Panos.

His friends' influence was also of significance for the student, who seems to have taken this factor into consideration for staying in the Comprehensive and in this way not leaving the company of his peers and the familiarity of his group of known people. As

he argues “we were four years here, all together with the guys, therefore in case I changed school I had to make new friends- I would not like that”. As regards his friends’ educational expectations they expressed their intention to him for studying fields like mathematics, physics, and engineering.

With reference to the impact of institutional-related factors, including as much the course of occupational guidance as the overall interactions with the teachers, Thanos makes no claim to any helpful contribution by neither of these parameters. The participant talks in more length about his disappointingly negative relation with his teachers, to which fact he attributes the lack of any communication with them. He points to their sarcasm, lack of interest and reluctance to be more explanations and support where pupils like him need it. Thanos, alike the other two male participants, voices an overtly negative and aggressive stance towards his educators accompanied by an explicit articulation of complete disengagement:

I have never discussed in detail with a teacher in occupational guidance course. I have asked for some information about studies beyond Lyceum, if we can consider that it as a discussion; I do not know; discussing with teachers does not fascinate me. It is probably due to the way they behave towards us; that is what is all about; it is not the way they teach or anything like that. Their behaviour matters to me; I want to tell them that I did not understand something and to know that they will come to explain it. Instead some teacher might say ‘what have I been doing all this time? I was explaining’ and he will not explain it at the end. That irritates me; all this irony; and their general indifference. It makes me not wanting to put my foot in some classes [with emphasis], to not bother at all, to put some of them down and start beating them. It is only one teacher who is a family friend of ours, whom I enjoy talking with

Thanos attributes his academic disengagement and lack of any interaction with his teachers about his career prospects, to the fraught and frustrating relationship he has with them. The only exception is referred by Thanos to be the teachers who belong to

their social network of friends. This brings up the need to embark on analyzing in more detail the nature of parental engagement and the way it impinges upon the educational route of the participant.

Through Thanos's account becomes evident the intense involvement of both of his parents into his schooling matters and especially the provision of help with the study at home:

When I was younger I was doing the home-work with both of my parents; both of them helping me. I did not want so much to do the homework with my father; I was a bit frightened of him yet my mother was proved to be more demanding

Both of his parents have the responsibility of contacting with the school's bureaucracy and staff while they have been both members of the 'Parents and Guardians Association'. His mother in specific seems to visit the school more often in order to monitor his son's achievement. In his words:

my parents come to school; oh, yes, they come at unexpected times [disappointingly]; I walk careless in the school corridor and here I see my mother, who came yet for another time to ask for my progress

Apart from the investment of considerable amount of time on behalf of his parents to providing help with the school assignments and supervising his overall progress, they also appear to control the people with whom their son is interacting. As it has been already noted one of the most important factors that made his father prevent him from attending Vocational Lyceum was the fear of social mixing with young people exhibiting uncontrolled and inappropriate behavior. According to his account "*my parents know all my friends; they know with whom I hang out. There were few persons that they had a problem with, for they thought that they drink too much, and they were telling me to stop mixing with them*".

In his narrative a lot of emphasis lies in the value his parents attach to education. Thanos speaks of the great amount of capital that they invest in his two older sisters' Higher

Education, by covering every cost of their studies and living, depicting at the same time the financial burden laying over their shoulders. Despite their financial strain, they spend however valuable economic capital in Thanos's extracurricular activities including English, music and dance lessons while it is also worth highlighting that they urge Thanos to undertake private tutorial lessons for boosting his achievement and start preparing early enough for the highly competitive National Examinations:

My parents have spent for me a lot of money; especially for my English lessons and my hobbies, guitar, traditional dances and scuba-diving. They were telling me this year to start tutorial lessons for the school subjects of the technological module but I did not want to burden them more. I have two sisters who are studying in different cities and my parents have to pay everything for them; and they have their mortgages too. I told them that I will start tutorial lessons next year for the preparation for National University entrance exams and this year I will take the supplementary lessons in school

University studies feature at the centre-stage of the parental expectations, communicated by Thanos with a sense- it could be claimed-of taken-for-granted-ness and certainty. What is expected for their son's education and career is clear, and this is the reason that discussions about his future prospects are a hot discussion topic among the members of their social network. As Thanos claims, such discussions provide valuable, 'hot' information (Ball and Vincent, 1998) about making the right choices for entering and choosing the most promising Higher Education School. Although his parents do not seem to prescribe a specific occupational route for him, his expectations are deeply embedded within the given and indubitable frame of University studies:

My parents talk with family friends and relatives about what I want to follow after Lyceum. In this way I learn more things too, in which University I can enter easily, which University School will be better for my future. They do not have something in specific in their minds; they want me of course to study and to become what I want; my father said to me 'become what you want; I will not

hinder you; on the contrary I will help you as much as I should'. Recently he was telling me all the time about businesses, as a profession with quite much money and bright future

It is interesting at this point to conclude Thanos's narrative with his personal envisioning of future. In spite of his contradictory and at times wavering stance towards his decision to attend Comprehensive Lyceum and the realization of his goal for studying Engineering, a sense of optimism and confidence permeates his sketching-out of his prospects. In the finishing passage of his narrative quoted below he seems to have integrated his father's suggestion to include business management in his plans, along with Engineering. His personal notion of success is entwined with the value attached to Higher Education and also to entrepreneurial activity, elements that both run deep in Thanos's familial legacy and habitus:

I would like to think of myself in the future as a graduate of Higher Education and probably an entrepreneur or Engineer. I will consider myself successful once I will have graduated and started my own business. I think I will make it somehow. Basically you get the sense that you win over yourself; that you have crossed your own limits. It is like a labyrinth with riddles, but in order to solve each riddle it requires too much of thinking. I do not consider money as success, although I want them, I like them but I do not regard them such an important thing. If a person wanted to become a University Professor and made it, this is the one I consider successful

Conclusion

The narratives of young people mentioned so far revolved around a matrix of ethno-national, religious, gender, local, cultural and familial positionalities. As it became evident the identification with Hellenism and its historic legacy featured saliently across their accounts along with Hellenism's perceived close-knit relation with Christian-Orthodox religion. Most of them articulate Greek-ness through a reference to a common past, common civilization, language, customs, mores and shared cultural values. The conceptualizations have also a diachronic and comparative dimension manifested through making the prideful link to the classic antiquity but also synchronically referring with bitterness and shame to the present seen as afflicted by cultural stagnation and decay.

What is interesting to point out once again is the prime importance attributed to the role of family conceptualized as a significant aspect of young people's sense of self, since almost all of the Greek participants identified themselves as a member of a specific family. Family is captured as the socializing force that mediates the construction of all the aforementioned ethno-national, religious, cultural and political allegiances. The centrality assigned to family is such that young participants less or more explicitly claim their selves to be the 'products' (e.g. Alexandra's account) or the 'continuation' (e.g. Stephen's account) of their parents. It is worth reminding that putting the premium on family is conceived (e.g. Panos's account) as a salient cultural value that differentiate Greeks from other ethno-national groups.

The indispensability of parental legacy is attributed to family's functioning as the provider of all the vital economic, emotional, social, cultural resources and as a moral compass through the life course. Both of participants' parents are accounted to work synergistically to support their children and facilitate their educational progress. Familial practices and strategies play a fundamental role in mediating the construction of young people's decisions and educational courses. As Bates and Riseborough argue "privilege

and disadvantage are ploughed into youth careers through family and education but most importantly at the interface between the two spheres” (1993, p. 9).

The parental involvement has been illustrated to be rather intense and multifarious, such as providing help them with homework, monitoring their progress, paying large amounts of money for private tutorial lessons, raising expectations and cultivating the cultural norm that pays tribute to Higher Education. The phrase “study, study, study” seems to sum up and demarcate the parental guidance and goal-setting. As it has been noted, varying degrees of economic, social and cultural capital work together in all of the participants’ cases towards the realization of social mobility and social reproduction. This element echoes the findings from Allatt’s study (1993) according to which parents were particularly proactive in mobilizing their resources and crafting “an educational environment propitious to the reproduction of social advantage in their children (ultimately translatable into economic capital)” (1993, p.149).

Obtaining a University degree features at the core of the young people’s expectations and notions of personal success and is narrated by the participants as the ultimate and prescribed life-goal. Although most of the young people were not steered by their parents to follow a specific occupational route (apart from the cases of Panos and Thanos) young people’s expectations seem to be in alignment with the parental ones, in the point that they are deeply inscribed within the given and indubitable frame of Higher Education studies. In this respect there are clear parallels with the “embedded choosers” in Ball’s studies whose “centre of gravity and sense of self is rooted in education” (Ball *et al*, 1999, p.210; 2000).

In the cases of Alexandra and Stephen, whose parents do not have a University degree, the prospect of obtaining one is elevated to a family-project bestowing pride and status upon the whole family. Studying at University can be claimed to be deeply interconnected with the processes of self-creation and improvement, of social mobility and acquiring respectability, of distinction and reproduction of familial privileges. To be

more specific, while obtaining an educational title for Alexandra inaugurates the process of becoming educated and cultured and therefore for becoming respectable, for Panos, whose father is a top executive of a prominent Engineering company, the degree is the *sine qua non* condition for realizing his goal of distinction. For Thanos and Ariadni whose parents are also University graduates, entering University and finding a befitted job emerges as the prescribed one-way route that runs deep in their familial legacy and middle-class habitus.

It is pertinent to refer also to the gender dimension of the above mentioned processes, since Alexandra, Ariadni and Helen all point to the significance that their positionalities as women play in the formation of their educational and occupational expectations and their future envisioning. All of them aspire and aim to become teachers in primary or secondary education after following a personal preference and a process of filtering through other professional options. It has been argued that the vivid projection to a future of family life mediates and determinatively gives shape to the decisions that they are called to make with the reference to University studies. Their identification as women who prioritize family creation leads them presumably to see themselves through the lens of the prescribed maternal role. What Helen alludes to when referring to her mother's admonition to follow an easy job, as befitted to a woman is the potency that domestic identity still enjoys in the Greek context. This is resonant with Hodkinson's study which identified gender-specific patterns of decision-making, with the young women opting for stereotypically female professions and receiving pressure from their environment to consider the "domestic, family life identity". To sum up in Hodkinson's and his associates terms "above all the career decision was integral to their sense of identity. It was both an extension of how they already saw themselves and a central part in the process of refining or reforming who they actually were." (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996, p.123).

Turning again to educational trajectories and school choices, they were accounted as a collective, familial project with extended consequences for the supposed 'pride' and

status of the whole family. Furthermore, the narratives offered a capturing of the educational decision-making as a process of following the institutional route that is perceived to be suitable for the young participants, or to put it differently, as a choice of what they came to perceive as more or less ‘natural’, as their ‘educational destiny’ (Bourdieu, 1976). The latter as it has been illustrated, was irrevocably linked with the socially valorized, academic path of Comprehensive as opposed to Vocational schooling. The divisive line between Vocational and Comprehensive schooling grows intensely in all students’ accounts, justified mainly in terms of occupational preferences and future plans that do not seem to be compatible with the Vocational pathway.

More importantly, Vocational schooling is constructed as a perilous and threatening institutional environment, attended by young people who tend to be perceived as ‘a bad source of influence’ and thus avoidable for social mixing. Furthermore for all those who aim high, like the participants mentioned so far, the Vocational Lyceum is thought of as providing a stifling intellectually-wise climate with the assumed less demanding curriculum, the ‘lazy’, insolent and uninterested academically students and the lenient teachers. It is useful at this point to remind the case of Thanos, who being the only person from this group to have considered the option of Vocational School, finally rejected it after taking into consideration the parental fears related with alleged risk of security, safety, and social mixing. Like the middle-class parents in Reay’s (2007a; 2008) studies, Thanos gives account of parental anxieties geared at preserving a “safe distance” from the classed others. These stereotypical discourses seem to reflect the presumed gap that distances the two schools and classifies the young people attending them into two distinct categories of unequal worth.

Another important theme raised by the participants’ accounts is the intense preoccupation and orientation towards a projected to the future account of the self. It can be argued that the narrations were discursive attempts to construct an evolving self, seen through a present but also through an emergent future. A close connection has been

exemplified between participants' future envisioning and their parents' expectations and wishes.

As regards the stance towards their future, the participants voiced a mixture of optimism and pessimism ranging from confidence and self-belief to frustration and resentment. As it has been detailed a sense of a blocked structure of opportunities was a shared and intense concern for the young people. The importance of having a powerful 'contact' that will operate as medium [meso] for finding a job and getting ahead is unanimously acknowledged by all the young people. Vryonides (2007a) study while drawing upon parental accounts attests to the centre-stage role that social networks ("mesa") play in crafting educational success and opening future employment prospects. The deficit of meritocracy and the all-pervading partisan practices have a tremendous impact on young people's envisioning, whose hopes seemed to have been already thwarted. As early as at the age of seventeen they realize that the prospects lying ahead is becoming part of the so-called 'generation of seven hundred Euros' or migrating to another country in order to get a chance to fulfill their expectations.

Chapter 7

MIGRANT YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE CHOICE OF COMPREHENSIVE LYCEUM

This chapter will analyze the narratives of educational choice and identities as accounted by six young people of migrant background attending the Comprehensive Lyceum: Eleanor and Vicky migrated from Albania and have been staying in Greece for 13 years the former and 15 years the latter. Nur has fled from Palestine and has been staying in Greece for six years. Irene, Dimitri and Nickolas migrated from Georgia and have 11, 14 and 8 years length of residence in Greece. Attention will be paid to the decision-making processes they were engaged with regarding the transition to post-16 education. Their choices will be analyzed as embedded in their familial migration histories, their identifications and positionalities, their experiences and trajectories through the educational system and their 'imagined futures' (Ball *et al*, 1999). It is worth underlining that the migrant young people's transition from the lower secondary schooling to post-compulsory education constitutes a significant first decision step on its own, given the drop-out rate which is particularly high for migrant adolescents, as it has been noted in chapter 2.

To start with the case of **Eleanor**, who is seventeen-years old and migrated from Albania along with her parents and her eldest brother at the age of four. Her father, previously an owner of a small business, currently works along with his son as a semi-skilled worker in constructions. Her mother having completed upper-secondary education was employed a bank clerk in Albania whereas now is a house-wife.

Eleanor interestingly provides a very detailed account of her ethnic identifications as developing through the interaction of two factors that seem to mark her evolving, personal history. Firstly she refers to her childhood upbringing in Albania with all the related memories and secondly she speaks of a change brought about by the migration

process and the attitudes of Greek host society towards migrants like her. The following passage exemplifies the dialectic and negotiated nature of ethnic positionalities, in the light of migration, while it underlines the influential part that host society plays as a Significant Other:

Despite that I have lived most of my childhood years here- in Albania I lived just for four years- and for my life remaining I am planning to stay here; however I don't feel Greek. Firstly, when I was brought up in Albania there were incidents, situations, as it happens usually, and they have stayed with me as memories and sometimes come to the fore; hence I can't say I'm Greek. On the other side though, it is also the stance that Greeks had towards me, that is, when I came, if they had been different, friendlier, then one in a million I would have likely felt Greek, but I don't think so [pause] I believe that ethnicity remains stable, let's say if I changed and believed that I am Greek, I may have said that but whichever the case is, I am Albanian. I want to be Albanian and I am not ashamed of that like others are

Eleanor makes a claim to the stability of her ethnic identification as Albanian, while voicing her explicit intention to be an Albanian as a matter of her personal allegiance, that is not accompanied by shame. What is also noteworthy in her narrative is her voiced sense of 'double alien-ness' dependent on the attitudes and stance that people both in Albania and Greece hold towards her. The excerpt below comes immediately after her self-assertion as Albanian and stands in contrast with her expressed claim for certainty and continuity, further attesting to the intricacy of the process:

I feel as alien [kxenh] in both countries. This is the matter, that my opinion is influenced by the behavior of other in both of the two countries. When I go to Albania, I feel alien, in the sense that I do not know the customs, the mores; exactly the opposite when I come to Greece. Here I feel alien because of the Greeks attitudes and because it does not come out the feeling that I am Greek

Eleanor interestingly makes the distinction between the “home” and the “motherland” claiming that “*my home is in Greece and my motherland is of course Albania*”. Another aspect that featured centrally in her narrative is her religious identification as Christian Orthodox. The fact that she got converted to the Christian faith is interestingly attributed to her personal choice by contrast with other participants who either do not speak about their baptism or attribute it to the power of contingencies, under the light of parental encouragement. As Eleanor recounts:

When I was little child I was Muslim and I did not comprehend what that means. Especially when you live somewhere where everybody is Muslim, you say ‘alright this is the way it is’. But when I came to Greece I realized that I did not want to be that but Orthodox instead. I felt as having something innate, like an inclination, yet I was born in a wrong country

Eleanor speaks assertively of herself as negotiating her way through the Greek society by embracing and trying hard to master all these purportedly insurmountable ‘differences’ that create and fixate the distance between Greeks and the Others. She uses the example of language while entering a caveat:

This might sound somehow [pause] but I reckon that I know the Greek language better than many of my Greek classmates. The Greeks do not have such an elaborated vocabulary and this is why many young people who are aliens excel in school and carry the national flag. This is mainly due to the fact that aliens yearn to learn something different by contrast with Greeks who are scared of the different. They do not want to see it nor hear it. We try to find ways to make Greeks understand that the things are doing are not humane at all

What Eleanor interestingly does in this passage is to completely invert the image of the alien ‘Other’ by projecting as characteristics of the latter the yearning to learn and embrace difference, and the academic excellence as the outcome of this. By a way of contrast Greeks are perceived as having a fear towards the difference of the ‘other’ fear that in her view leads them in cases to ‘inhumane’ attitudes and actions.

Shifting the analysis to the matter of educational trajectory and related school-choices, not surprisingly, Eleanor believes that in the context of school ethnicity plays a significant play in disfavours pupils with migrant background, especially Albanians. She states with assertiveness that she is being marked down and treated unfairly on the basis of her Albanian origin. In the light of teachers' unfair treatment and partial assessment Eleanor claims that equal opportunities are nothing more than a violated promise:

By no means, I believe, are there the same opportunities for all pupils. I might be wrong, but I believe that I have been unjustly marked just because I am Albanian. This was apparent because there was a big gap in my grades, I was writing 18 in tests and the teachers were marking me at the end of the term with 13. This is obvious, that they do not like you because you are from Albania

Concerning her learner identity, she identifies herself as a student of very good performance with the potential of achieving excellent scores, given that more effort is made by her. Despite that, at the transitional point after the end of Gymnasium when she had to decide over the type of Lyceum, she seemed to have been attracted by the option of Vocational Lyceum which was the choice of her group of Albanian friends. In her words:

I believed that my marks were quite high in order to come to Comprehensive and it would be stupid should I go to Vocational. I wanted, however, to go there because I had my group of friends going. I thought it was important factor for choosing school, but I proved wrong as it does not play such an important role, I was the one to magnify it. I did very well I have not gone there, it would have been a great mistake given my high grades, I am around 17/20 but I believe that I can go further up with more effort

Although Eleanor considers in retrospect the choice of Vocational Lyceum while having high grades as a foolish thing to do, the influence of her co-ethnic peers seemed to have been a potent factor. She did not seem eager in clarifying the reasons that made her

change her opinion, but she implicitly mentioned that these were related with the relationship with her friends. Retrospectively she acknowledges that a choice of school based on the friends influence given her high achievement would have been a horrible mistake. But why would attending Vocational be such a “great mistake” in her view?

It is the distance- I cannot take buses-, but is also the situation that prevails over there, there is very much of slackness. I think we should be a bit afraid of our teachers, but not too much. The boys over there try to show that they are something important; yet the girls do not differentiate I think so much. I have heard that lots of bad things happen there, like gangs and lots more- what can I say- abuse of various substances, moreover within the school premises, the least bad thing is the smoking, the worse follow after that

Apart from the reference Eleanor makes to the factor of geographical distance, she also unquestionably endorses a widely shared discourse on Vocational Schools as being dangerous places, with problems of laxity, slackness, drugs abuse and violence. The students are constructed as insolent, lacking the duly respect for teachers, and especially the males as tending to a rather violent and deviant behaviour. These themes, as it has been exemplified, were recurring in the narratives of Thanos, Stephen, Panos, Ariadni, Alexandra and Helen, all of them attending the Comprehensive Lyceum.

As regards the role of her parents in her educational route, it can be claimed that they are not accounted to have been explicitly involved in her decision making over schools. Her mother’s influence though is underlined especially during Eleanor’s early years in Primary education. During this period her mother emerged as the dominant figure in her upbringing, paying particular attention to her daughter’s linguistic development through the reading of numerous books in Albanian and Greek. As a result she claims that “*like my mother who hated mathematics and loved literature and theoretical subjects, I started to love these subjects too*”. As a result, Eleanor has chosen to attend the theoretical module that qualifies her to take the respective University Exams. She also attends private Tutorial classes in English and in the core subjects of the module.

With reference to the formation of Eleanor's professional goals, her mother is depicted as leaving enough room for Eleanor to decide what is best for her on the grounds of her abilities and the pragmatic match of studies and future occupation. Her mother's stance is interestingly contrasted with the pressure that other parents put on their children in order the latter to follow a career path that their parents prefer and approve. The passive conformism and the timidity demonstrated by these young people can have deleterious effects on their future lives in Eleanor's view. In her words:

My mother tells me to do what I know better, what I can do better; she does not tell me to follow a specific profession; she does not repress me. Apart from liking one profession, it must provide you with an income enough for survival that means that I cannot study psychology and then not to exercise it; I want to become whatever I study. There are young people who are forced to follow the occupation their parents want for them. The occupation might bring money but not be the one they themselves prefer. This is quite bad because these persons might have problems in the future, might not like the occupation they exercise and this will have consequences; they will then accuse their parents who forced them. Timidity does not always bring about the best results

As regards Eleanor's occupational horizon, this includes professions that require high marks in theoretical as opposed to positive subjects, since she perceives herself more capable in theory and language related courses rather than in mathematics and physics. On a secondary level, she has formed a preference for psychology, social work and teaching, professions that she perceives to be based on the notions of understanding, empathy and social service:

I basically want to become psychologist but recently I heard that it is difficult to find a job and how much more difficult to open your office where the responsibility the individual has is bigger. If and in case that I will not achieve that, I would like to become social worker, which also has a direct relation with psychological theories but I do not know much about this profession. In the worst

case I would like to become a teacher, in Primary, Gymnasium, Lyceum, depending. All those professions I told you about are linked with the fact that I want to help people, to stand by them, to support them. They are directly linked with the fact that I want to understand people

Eleanor's predilection for occupations with distinct social character, bound to be for the benefit of the public is tightly entwined with her own interpretation of the notion of success. The latter is seen to be inexorably linked with law-abidingness and working towards the public good. Her conception of 'success' is also acknowledged to be in contrast with the widely circulated and adopted notion of 'success' revolving around egotistical accumulation of money and personal fame:

Society considers successful whoever has big economic affluence or is famous. I think that success is, if and in case I will not do anything unlawful with relation to my profession any injustices towards my fellow humans; and to offer to society, not to just think about myself

However Eleanor recognizes that the path towards the fulfillment of her goals is not without its barriers. More importantly, visualizing the possible constraints that she might encounter in the short or longer run emerges to be an essential part of the imagining of her future. Although Eleanor does refer to the indispensability of having social contacts as the only way of navigating through the Greek labour market, what seems to be her major concern is the role that racism and discriminatory practices on grounds of ethnicity and gender may play. Therefore, her deep anxiety and agony about her occupational future are rooted more to the unequal treatment and the 'blocked opportunities' that migrants and women are perceived to be having in Greek society:

In Greece you have to have important contacts in order to succeed. Everybody knows that. Racism exists intensely but also discrimination as regards the gender. Someone let's say might know that a professional comes from a foreign country, e.g. Albania, or that she is a woman-I bet he will not go there. Hence, these are things I need to take into serious consideration

Shifting now to **Vicky**, a seventeen-year-old woman from Albania, her account differs significantly in many respects from her co-ethnic peers. In order for these differences to be understood it is essential they are located in her narrative grid. Vicky is the only child of her family, who migrated to Greece along with her parents when she was only two years-old, thus having fifteen years residence already in the country. Vicky originates from South Albania where her father owned a small restaurant and her mother was a post-office clerk, both of whom completed higher secondary education. Her father is currently occupied in constructions and her mother in a bakery. For Vicky the small town in Albania that she comes from is a place for which she does not seem to feel any emotional affinity. When she makes reference to her place of origin, she does that only to argue for her differentiation, divergence and distance from her parents' way of thinking. As she accounts:

My parents are narrow-minded or I am open-minded. I am a bit revolutionary; my ideas do not fit so much with theirs; we disagree in many things but since they are my parents I listen to them

It merits noting that Vicky's parents are members of the Albanian Association and they frequently participate in discussions and social gatherings with their co-ethnics. Vicky however does not narrate herself in terms of her country of origin, of ethnicity or religion, element that stands in stark contrast with the accounts of the rest migrant and non-migrant young people. But this can be possibly linked with her lengthy residence in Greece. To be more precise, when she was further probed about her sense of belongingness Vicky gave the following assertive reply "*I don't like saying that I belong somewhere. I am an independent person*". The claim to non-belongingness and independence can be argued to indicate her distance from anything that embodies her Albanian legacy, from the language, to culture and to the way of life. Moreover her overall tone of voice communicated that she did not want to contemplate further on this issue. As she very briefly states:

I have actually adopted the Greek style of life. I go to Albania and I can't stand it there. It is possibly because I can't speak the language so well. Moreover Albanian culture is far different from the Greek

Given that the parameters of ethnic, religious or classed identifications are completely absent from her self-narrative, it is not surprising that they are not accounted to have played any particular role in her school-specific experiences. It is on the latter that the focus of analysis will now be placed on.

As regards her educational trajectory Vicky speaks of herself as being one of the high-achieving pupils. She accounts the rather positive experiences with her teachers in high school, which she contrasts with the partial treatment and marking practices of the teachers in Lyceum:

The relations with my teachers in Gymnasium were excellent. They were the best I could ever have, everyone did incredible job. Just imagine that there was no need to study more than a half-hour in the home. Here everything is different. The teachers they do not their job as they should; they do not behave so good; they do not mark fairly; I might write 19 in tests and I get 15 at the end. Everyone in the tutorial schools knows how they mark

With reference to the matter of decision-making about post-16 schooling, Vicky conceptualizes it as a long-term engagement that dates back to a period that signalled the starting point of two inter-related processes, namely of self-awareness and of getting to know what school is all about. Her distinctively assertive account might be claimed to depict a rather rational and pragmatic process of decision making. The pragmatic factor of her academic achievement and the schema of a “proper education” including and leading exclusively to University, are mobilized to rule out any possibility of considering the ‘non-proper’ and thus unsuitable Vocational Education. In her words:

From the beginning I was determined to take the proper education and to enter University. It was since the time that I started getting to know myself and what

the school is all about. I did not even think of going to Vocational Lyceum. It had also to do with my achievement, that was 19, 6/20 for Gymnasium and 17, 6/20 here in Comprehensive. Many young people are getting heavily influenced by their parents whereas others only judge by the marks they gain and decide over the schools

Regarding the possible influences exerted by her teachers through personal communication and the course of occupational guidance, she comments rather dismissively on the absence of any contact with the teaching staff and the ill-delivered course of career guidance:

During Gymnasium I have never had any discussion with my teachers concerning my future occupational plans. In the last grade of Gymnasium, we did the course of school career guidance but it was anything but that. They did not speak at all about occupations and which has future prospects and which does not, in order to give us some direction

With reference to her friends, most of who are from Albania, she gives an identical picture with the ones provided by the rest participants, though with a significant difference which will be pointed out later. As she recounts, the dominant scenarios for her friends includes firstly dropping out of Comprehensive Lyceum and following Vocational Lyceum and secondly leaving school and entering the labour market. What is precisely relevant is the discourse she uses in order to make sense of her friends' distinctively different post-16 routes. Her account could be characterized as having a voluntaristic and family-centred perspective. Within this frame the individual actions, in the given case leaving Lyceum and finding a job, are construed as outcomes of inadequate parenting, with the parents perceived as not being effective enough in cultivating and transmitting to their offspring the motivation for learning and education. In addition, the young people are depicted as lacking the necessary virtues of eagerness and tenacity for academic progress and as settling for the "easy staff" instead of aiming high and working persistently hard to achieve their goals. In Vicky's words:

Most of my friends they dropped out of Comprehensive and went to Vocational, others dropped entirely out of school and found a job. Their parents did not give them the right impetus in order to be good in what they do or to explain them that school is after all necessary for doing something with your life. They never thought in this way- how to say it- they are used in the easy stuff and they did not like pushing themselves, therefore they gave up. To give up and find a job is the easy solution. Others who felt pressure by the demands of Comprehensive Lyceum and University, chose a different path, a vocation; those, if they are good in what they decided to do, they might fare better in their lives

As regards her own occupational goals she refers to her personal preference for theoretical studies and in specific journalism. However under the pressurizing light of her parents' advice she changed her preference for the positive stream of studies and currently aims, always according to parental guidance, for entrance in pharmaceuticals. As the extract below demonstrates her parents, and especially her mother, appear hugely involved in her decision-making regarding the module of courses which is linked with the national exams for University entrance and in turn the field of studies and the future occupation. The elements that are mostly appreciated by her parents for this choice are the employment prospects and the expected level of income that an occupation might bring. More specifically her mother to add to the credibility of her view brings in valuable firsthand information emanating from personal communication with graduates and professionals from the pharmaceuticals field. In this context, Vicky is discouraged from following the theoretical stream and the studies in journalism on the pragmatic grounds of dubious employment opportunities.

In the beginning I wanted to follow the theoretical stream and study journalism but my parents started saying that there are no jobs here for this profession and so on, and they told me about pharmaceuticals and this is what I am now aiming at. I do not know what to do; I cannot enter in pharmaceuticals in Thessaloniki for it requires 18686 exam credits. You need to gain high marks in biology and physics and I am good in both of them and I like them as subjects but

pharmaceutics, as a Department dealing with drugs and so on, I never liked the idea of studying health sciences- Ok it was only during Primary that I wanted to become a doctor. My mother knows girls who study pharmaceutics and have told her that it is a very good department; she also knows pharmacists who say that they were just sitting and earning money

Exploring further the contour lines of parental involvement, Vicky emphatically argues for the cardinal role her parents played in her overall educational route. The indispensability of their involvement is being manifested through offering help with homework during Primary education and monitoring her studies, through their persistent encouragement to read and achieve high grades, encapsulated by the phrase “*study, study, study*”. Also important is the investment of financial resources for boosting her performance, through paying for her private tutorial lessons in all the courses the positive module (mathematics, physics and chemistry) but also for acquiring proficiency in English language. It is noteworthy that despite all these Vicky makes a special and apologetic reference to the inability of her parents to pay school visits and ask educators about her progress or involve with the Parents and Guardian’s Association. She is quick to state that the latter does not emanate from some alleged apathy and detachment from her academic route, but is due to the very long and demanding work schedules. The following passage is considered to shed some light on important aspects of the intense and long-running process of parental engagement:

If my mother and my father did not pay attention to my studies, I do not think that I would even have been here. In general I did everything on my own in school but in the beginning in Primary she was helping me. Then, they did not control me; they trust me in studying. They wanted me to be good in school. I have that too; I also wanted to be good in school. It has stuck in their minds the idea of going for Pharmaceutics and they tell me all the time ‘study, study, study’. They do not come to ask about my progress either to school or to the tutorial school. They have only gone once; it is not that they are indifferent but they do not have time

like other parents. They never had any involvement with the Parents and Guardians Association; they did not have the time

Vicky's progress in school along with her future studies feature on the daily agenda of family discussions within the household but also beyond that. The discussions her parents have with family friends and the exchange of information about their children's progress and future plans seem to operate as an additional fulcrum for communicating and enforcing the norm of high achievement upon Vicky and in turn pressurizing her towards this direction. The comparison her parents make between Vicky's school performance and their friends' daughter one exemplifies that:

My parents discuss about my future with friends and acquaintances. For instance they tell me about the daughter of my father's friend that she does not attend a tutorial school and yet she achieved 19 and 'you', they tell me, 'achieved 17, 6 after attending Tutorial School'. Ok. I do not understand such things

Concluding Vicky's narrative, it is pertinent to refer to her future envisioning. Despite her high achievement and her heightened sense of self-efficacy, she sees her future with considerable pessimism mainly because she acknowledges the omnipotence of social contacts. This social fact is perceived by the young woman to challenge the power of educational qualifications, wounding in this manner irrevocably meritocracy and dissolving her trust towards polity:

Nowadays if you do not have a 'contact' [meso], you cannot achieve many things. You have to look and find a 'contact', namely it needs preparation and luck. You have to have the right acquaintances in order to reach wherever you want to reach. Finally nowadays you cannot do something just on your own; therefore you have to search for it. I have heard so many things and I have lost my trust to everybody; to politicians, to degrees, to everything. I do not trust such people

At the other end of the spectrum lie the accounts of two young women from Palestine and Armenia. In comparison with Vicky's account they narrate themselves in rather ethnic and collective terms while focusing on the constraints encountered in their school trajectories and the hindrances envisioned beyond education.

To start with **Nur**, a seventeen-years-old student from Palestine with a family migration history differing significantly from those accounted by other young people with migrant background. Her father, in more detail, studied medicine in Greece, then moved back to Palestine where he had his own private clinic while being a surgeon in a big hospital. However due to the turbulent situation prevailing in Palestine, he was forced to seek refuge again to Greece along with his wife and three children and he currently works as a surgeon in Inter-Balkan hospital which is considered as the biggest private hospital in Balkans. Nur's father therefore did not experience any kind of downward mobility, given that he had his Medicine Degree awarded by a Greek University. This fact stands in sharp contrast with the experiences the rest of migrant young people' parents had when they found themselves incapacitated to accredit their degrees and convert their institutionalised cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) into the host society's legitimate currency. The factor of limited proficiency in Greek language further hinders the process outlined above, as in the case of Nur's mother who despite having studied Arabic Literature in Palestine, she does not exercise her profession because '*she does not know Greek well*'.

Likewise, Nur's two older brothers, who although they studied economics in Palestine yet they did not manage to get their degrees certified but instead got offered a place to study anew in the least prestigious Higher Technological Institutions. As Nur accounts "*they had to start from scratch their studies; so the Higher Technological Institutions were their last solution*". As a result, her eldest brother got offered a place to study marketing and public relations and her youngest brother to study business administration.

Nur provides us with an articulate account of herself as revolving around her collective identifications with reference to Arabic language, Muslim religion and her ethnic belonging to the Palestinian community. The inextricable relation between her sense of identity and her mother tongue is captured not least by the emotionally-laden, self-referential questions in the passage below. Furthermore, Nur's narrative account echoes similarity to Greek young people's conceptualization of ethnic bonding as forged and fortified through the calamity and the sorrow caused by the war. Through her account the Palestinian identity can be seen as weaved in interaction and confrontation to the personalized 'other', the Israeli Jew. The incessant fight for freedom is seen by Nur as a struggle in the name and defence of collective history that invokes prideful feelings for her co-patriots. In her words:

My language, my religious convictions that I am Muslim, my ethnicity, that I am Palestinian, all are very important to who I am. When I came here I was feeling as if I had lost somehow my identity, for I started forgetting several words, I had forgotten what some difficult words mean. And I did not know then the Greek language, I was also forgetting Arabic and I was saying to myself 'what do I know? Who am I?' Being Palestinian means everything to me; it is the pride for all these years that we are fighting against Israelis; so many people have been killed and we still fight and care for our history. Here you ask young people what is a national celebration about and they burst into laughing because they do not know. So many sacrifices have been made in order this freedom to be gained and they do not appreciate it; whereas we still fight for freedom, no matter how many things we have lost. I miss so much Palestine but under the warfare it was not a life what we led there

Turning now to issue of her school trajectory and educational decision making, it is useful to start unpacking her experiences from her early, schooling years spent in Palestine. Nur arrived in Greece only after completing Primary Education in a private institution in Palestine at the age of twelve. She speaks rather enthusiastically about the school she has been previously attending and which she visits every time her family

goes back to Palestine. Nur's parents in her view have placed more significance on her education compared with her siblings, who attended state schools whereas she attended a private one. *"Because I am the only girl in the family my parents wanted to take more care of my education"* she says. When in Greece her parents did not consider the option of private schooling because in Nur's perspective her mother, who seemed to be intensely involved with her daughter's education, mistakenly anticipated that in a European country like Greece the standards of state-funded schools will not be different from the private ones:

My mother wrongly believed that we came to a European country. My parents thought that because we are in a European country schools will be perfect and therefore going to private school will not be necessary. But it is by any means like that. The last years I convinced them that Greece is from the worst countries in education matters. Basically public and private schools in Palestine do not differ as much as here; the private here are very, very nice and the state schools [pause] you come here and wonder 'what is this mess?'

The young woman straight from the start of the interview refers with incessant flow to her utterly frustrating experiences in Greek education, a fact that could plausibly be construed as being in tension with the high level of academic performance and her place among the high-achievers of her class with score of 17/20. Although Nur entered Gymnasium without having previously attended a Reception Class for migrant students, the level of her proficiency in Greek language is remarkably high and praised by her teachers. Things yet are not accounted to have been easy for her, not least because she had to struggle in order to acquire linguistic competency in Greek. In an attempt to exemplify how demanding this phase was for her she recounts an incident with a teacher that has left a vivid mark in her memory. She also refers, like Eleanor and Vicky, to the unfair evaluation of her achievement by the teachers:

The teachers praise me; they seem to like me but this is not evident in their grades. If it is not evident in their grades, it does not bother me at all; I do not

care; they might do it so as the other students to hate me. I believe they mark me down for some reasons. I will not forget when I firstly came to Greece and I did not know the language, a teacher asked me to stand up against the board in front of everyone and tell the History lesson yet I did not understand even the question she was asking. Was it that nice? To ask from someone who does not even know the language to tell the lesson against the board while everyone is staring at her? [pause] Since that day I tell the lesson everyday to my mother and I ask her for any difficult words

As a result of her early negative experience, Nur characteristically mentions that on a daily basis she still gets additional help for the lessons from her mother. Moreover as soon as she joined Lyceum she started private tutorial lessons in the module subjects that are essential for University entrance. She interestingly repeats her claim that her parents took more care of her education compared to her brothers, since the latter did not go either to a private school nor did they attend tutorial classes. The young woman articulates a twofold interpretation of this fact; on one hand as resulting from her parents' particular interest in their sole daughter's education and on the other hand as her personal choice, as a product of her own agency and self-initiative:

Because I am the only girl my parents maybe wanted to pay more attention to my education. But it is not only their opinion that counts; I think that I had put my hand on it too. My brothers have attended neither English classes nor tutorial classes whereas I attend, because I asked for it; I [with emphasis] said 'I [with emphasis] want to go; and they did not say no to me. Therefore, it was somehow my choice

With reference to post-16 school choice, the decision over the Lyceum Nur attended in the first grade was made mainly by her parents on the basis of vicinity. As Nur accounts "I did the first grade of Lyceum in a different school because my parents wanted the school to be as closest to our home as possible". However, the situation with her classmates in the closest to their home Comprehensive Lyceum urged her to convince

her parents to change school: “*the students there were racists. You did not feel as a friend with someone, I thus wanted to make a new start*”. The perceived racists classmates made her feel as if she were in a hostile environment, a state unfortunately that she found herself yet for another time in the next Lyceum, the one that Nur attends at the time of the interviews:

I thought that this school would be better but it is worse, far worse. I regretted coming to this school. It is not only that they are racists; they say ‘I hate the blacks, I hate the Albanians, I hate the Russians’; they also break chairs, put fires and the head-teacher seems to still look around to find out who did it

For Nur being with peers who voice explicitly racism-laden views and commit incomprehensibly to her violent acts in and outside the classroom, is as much the root of her disappointment and alienation as the main driving force underlying her decision about changing schools. As regards the facets of her personal experience she makes reference to bullying, lack of friendliness and comfort, all of them interlacing to make her feel excluded from the school community. Moreover her account also points to the relatively passive role of teachers and of the headmaster, who do not seem to intervene drastically to improve the apparently problematic situation:

When I attempt to reply to a teachers’ question some of classmates were laughing at me and throwing little chunks of paper behind my back. It was really crack-nerving. After they did it several times, I went to the head-teacher and reported on that and then my classmates did not even speak to me. I do not feel friendliness with anyone. I do not feel comfortable in the classroom. It took me a whole month after all these to lift my hand up again and participate in the class

Nur’s intense feelings of discomfort and unease are exacerbated by the stance of her teachers, who are viewed as being indifferent and ignoring what is happening in the classroom between her and her classmates. In her view teachers are not doing anything, nor even trying, towards ameliorating and preventing the tensions among young people and restoring their relations. The teachers’ stance is construed in her view as a product

of their favouritism towards certain students on the basis of their ethnic origin and their achievement level. As Nur details in the excerpt below, there is a hierarchy of teacher's likings in which the least favoured position is occupied by the non-Greek students and the most prominent one by the highest achieving male, Greek students:

The teachers' behavior depends on likings. The Albanians and the Russians are not favored at all. A very good Greek male student characterizes the teachers 'as...' in front of them and they do not say anything to him. Don't the teachers like to be respected, I wonder? He and others speak to teachers with the worst of manners and use swearwords. I have also seen this student cheating in tests. And he is considered 'the high-achieving student' and I do not know what else. The teachers – is unbelievable, what can I say- don't they like to be respected?

The educators' partial treatment towards some of her classmates, seem to contribute to their very tolerant response to the latter's disrespectful behaviour, directed not only to her but to the teachers' themselves. These discomforting experiences are building up her ever-growing need for escape from a school environment where she feels there is no valued place for her. At this point it is pertinent to elaborate on how her sense of lack of belonging-ness appears to be tightly linked with the treatment received by her peers.

Nur perceives the relations among her peers as being hierarchically structured, with few male Greeks dominating through various verbal and other symbolic means over other non-Greek, and mainly female, young people who aspire to be members of the group:

I cannot withstand my classmates here, they are very racists. I do not want to spend my last years in school in this way. All of them are a clique; it is just me and Irene [participant of Armenian origin] who is also from another country that are not part of it. Other girls, for instance, from other countries who want to be in this clique too, they been taken advantage of; the guys tell them 'go and do this and that for me' and they do not say anything; they just do it. In this school the Greeks believe that they are the only ones and the others are inferior and this is unbearable. I am trying to convince my parents to leave from here

In contrast with the other non-Greek females who silently tolerate their ascribed position, Nur clearly dissociates herself from them by claiming emphatically that she cannot withstand what can be depicted as a unique form of symbolic domination that impregnates the interactions in the school context. By contrast, for Nur it is unbearable to accept the fact that she is being other-defined and positioned as somehow inferior to her Greek counterparts. While she denies to exhibit compliance and passivity, she reacts and objects to any behaviour pattern perceived as racist, derogatory and hostile towards her, thereby ruling out any possibility of becoming an unequal member of this Greek-dominant group. As a result Nur not surprisingly reckons that she is left with no other choice but change school, for a second time:

I now plead my parents to take me to the school for aliens [ksenous]. This is only for aliens. I would like to go there because all the students come from different countries, so it would be nice for my difference will not be highlighted. However my parents do not want me to go there because they think that my level in Greek language will deteriorate, because here I am with Greeks and there they will not know Greek, they will be in the process of knowing it

The above emotionally-charged passage indicates Nur's heightened degree of her disappointment and the attendant determination for going to the school which is for foreigner-only- students. It is also worth underlining that the specific school is called not with its official name which is "foreigners' school" but with a tag that instead seem to encapsulate what in Nur's view it really is, namely a school solely for "aliens".

Nur's parents play decisive role in this evolving decision-taking process that resembles an active negotiation, captured not least through the use of the verb 'plead'. Her parents however object to Nur's expressed wish and determination to join the school for foreigners, considering the benefits as regards her linguistic capacity in Greek that her stay in the mainstream, Greek-dominant school brings. On the other hand Nur perceives that in the mainstream school she is being othered and treated differently on the basis of her 'difference'.

This assumed difference is further fore-grounded and accentuated in the specific school context where being Greek emerges as the dominant standard, against which the non-Greek young people seem to be judged and potentially dominated. As a result Nur's preference for the aliens-only-school emerges as a form of escape from a school environment that does not provide equal opportunities to all students to feel valued and respected. What seems to underlie this fact is according to Nur's perspective a process of attenuating and de-valuing of 'difference'. This 'difference' within the institutional context of the 'aliens- only- school', will be inevitably de-emphasized as a natural outcome of the school's intake. How then Nur does make sense of this 'difference'? As the following passage attests to, Nur conceptualizes it in terms of an absence of shared-ness or sameness with reference to language, religion, ethnicity and life perspectives:

It has never happened to be with someone from Palestine or any other Arabic country in the same school and this is very bad because it accentuates my difference, it is not nice. In this decisive period of my life I did not have anyone who is like me; all are different as regards the language, the religion, the ethnicity, the life views; all are different

Shifting now to the choice between Vocational and Comprehensive schooling, Nur explicitly argues that attending Vocational Lyceum was never considered by her as an alternative route to Comprehensive since the former was entirely excluded from her options. It is worth highlighting that Nur's point of reference is the Palestinian educational system, in which this type of institutional branching does not occur at all. Moreover as it is claimed in the excerpt below, a student with above average achievement and confidence is a rather taken-for-granted thing to attend Comprehensive Lyceum. She continues by stating the need for an institutional change in grounds of Vocational Lyceum's unequal standing and absence of rigorous academic standards:

I have not thought about going to Vocational at all. This is a standard thing to think and do. If someone is a good student or believes that she or he will make it and will not be crap, then he will choose Comprehensive Lyceum. Moreover I

was not in any dilemma because in Palestine there is not such a thing. After you complete Lyceum you can make a choice. I think they have to change that. I have met many young people who say 'I will not make it, I do not have a clue what the Comprehensive will be like and I will go to Vocational because you do not do anything' because they indeed do not do anything. I know many students from Gymnasium who attend it and I know that they start the classes later and finish earlier, that they do not do so much of a lesson and that they in general mess around. Definitely they have to change that. But basically they have to change first the teachers, their attitudes towards the students and the way they mark them

As regards the way she envisages herself she appears rather hesitant to sketch out a self-narrative projected to the future. Concerning her educational and occupational aspirations she also claims herself to be quite undecided and without having a concrete scenario in her mind. What only seems to frame her future options is the choice of the positive stream that gives access to numerous prestigious fields including Polytechnic Schools (engineering and architecture), medicine, and mathematics, physics, biology and chemistry; in this process her parents are depicted as being by her side and helping her to decide what she wants on the basis of her personal preference. In her words:

I chose Positive Stream because it gives you more options; hence in the case even that I will not know what I want when completing Lyceum, I will easily find something from these fields. My parents try to help me find what I want for I do not have a clue. There is freedom; whatever everyone wants

Turning now to the case of **Irene**, a nineteen-year-old woman of Armenian origin who was born and raised in Georgia, it could be said that her narrative shares quite many similarities with the previous one of Nur's and a few, yet significant differences. Irene migrated to Greece along with her parents and sister at the age of eleven. Her mother has a University degree in Literature and worked as a literature teacher in secondary

education and her father was a driving instructor and owned the driving school. However, the reason for their migration was strictly of economic survival. As Irene recites:

After the dissolution of Soviet Union, all people were left without money at all and they had to find a way out; things were very difficult in Georgia and my parents decided to migrate to find a job in another country, for a better future

Irene's narrative exemplifies the intricacy of processes of identifications and of belonging when they are compounded by multiple dislocations and uprooting. "I come from Georgia", she stated at the beginning of the interview, meaning the place that her family settled, only to assert a little later that she is of Armenian origin. Irene's family is part of the Armenian diaspora that settled in Georgia, part of the erstwhile Soviet Union:

Basically I am Armenian. My grandparents are of Armenian origin but they lived in Georgia. There is a city there that everyone is of Armenian descent. My mother studied Literature and my father too studied there. Here I only have a residence permit, nor identity card or anything else. I do feel a little Greek since I live here but not so much; I feel mostly that I am Armenian

What features prominently in Irene's narrative is her belief that being an 'alien' in Greece has altered hugely her whole life, a fact that is closely connected, as illustrated below, with the downward mobility experienced by her parents. To be more specific, Irene seems heavily influenced by the fact that her father and mother were not able to convert their educational and vocational qualifications, along with their previous professional experience, into respective occupational positions in the host country, but instead are working in constructions and in cleaning services. Her account is imbued with a mixture of frustration and self-sarcasm that utterly contests and negates the motif according to which her family's migration to Greece was purportedly "for a better future". It merits adding that the sarcasm when referring to her parents current occupations was as much evident in her facial expressions as in the tone of her voice:

My mother here works in a bus station serving coffees and cleaning and my father who was a driving instructor now works in constructions. My mother worked in Georgia for 25 years as secondary school's literature teacher and here is a cleaner [with sarcastic smile]. They had to study all over again and they are old, they could not do it. Coming to Greece for me and my sister was supposedly for a better future but for my parents it was not by any means

Shifting now to the account of her educational route, it should be stated from the outset that 'being an alien' was featuring saliently as much in the way she generically experiences school as in the formation of her occupational and academic aspirations and future plans. It is useful to note before proceeding to further particulars that when Irene came to Greece she was at the age of eleven and joined the fifth and pre-final grade of Primary school. Before that, as she accounts: "*I entered a Reception Class where they teach aliens to learn Greek. It was very difficult in the beginning; I could not understand a word*".

Her secondary school years are described in rather positive terms, a fact attributed to the presence of a group of co-ethnic friends attending the same Gymnasium. As she accounts her very best friend is of Armenian origin, born like Irene in Georgia, while another three girls, friends of hers and few boys came from the same place. The influence of her friends emerges to be significant, to the extent that it operates as creating a buffering zone that moderates the hostility of the surrounding school context. What does merit further attention in the excerpt below is the emphasis placed on the loneliness and sense of abandonment felt by Irene after she got separated from her friends, as a result of following different post-16-routes:

During Gymnasium I did not have any problem. It was perfect. There were all my friends with whom we were together for five-six years. Then they left and I have been all alone [pause] that is the thing. Some of them left from Gymnasium and went to Vocational, two-three girls came here first and after spending a year they went to Vocational, and others dropped out of school. I firstly wanted to go

to Vocational but my best friend chose to come to Comprehensive and I came here along with her and now that she is gone, I was left on my own [with sarcastic smile]

As evident in the account above, Irene was heavily influenced by her best friend in attending Comprehensive Lyceum. When exploring further the way of making up her mind regarding the transition to Lyceum, she refers to the role her parents played in that and specifically to the dissonant views expressed by them on the matter. To be more precise, her father highlighted the difficulty of the Comprehensive Lyceum curriculum for a non-native speaker like her and juxtaposed it to the perceived pragmatic gains that Vocational Lyceum grants via occupational-specific learning. Her mother on the other hand attached more significance to the issue of each school's location and the distance from the family home, while she also pointed to the perceived risks that attending a Vocational School in her view entailed. In Irene's words:

This school was close to my home and I came here, in the same building block, for Gymnasium as well. I thought about going to Vocational many times, because it is easier there and my father was telling me to go but my mother was saying that 'it is far and you have to take buses and it is better to go to the school that is closest'. My mother was telling me to choose the Comprehensive and my father the Vocational. My mother was saying this because it is here, close to us, and because she was hearing various things about the sort of stuff that is going on in Vocational schools, such as drugs and so on. My father was telling me to go to Vocational so as to learn a vocation, because the Comprehensive is difficult, and it is indeed difficult if you do not know the language well. Hence, I decided to come here because it is closer to our home. However, I wanted more to go to Vocational

As Irene explains, in the choice-making process her mother's view favouring the closest in terms of distance Comprehensive Lyceum along with her best friend's preference, mentioned in the previous passage, for attending the latter, had a sway over her decision

to attend Comprehensive school. In spite of these influences, the concluding phrase of Irene's narration stating explicitly her personal wish to follow the Vocational path, indicates that the young woman probably considers additional parameters at work towards forming her preference for Vocational Lyceum. In the passage below she interestingly elaborates the reasons underlying this finally unrealized orientation:

I wanted to attend Vocational for I would have learnt a vocation over there and because there are lots of aliens [ksenoi]. It was because of these reasons mainly that I wanted to go there. Most of young people, who come from where I come, have gone there. There would not be anything racist, whereas here sometimes you feel it, sometimes not. I have felt it various times both in and out of classroom. When the school started in September it was in a greater extent, now things have calmed down; however you still feel it. I had sometimes conflicts with teachers and classmates when they speak about aliens. When they speak with this manner about aliens [ksenous], and they say 'you come from there'. I have come into conflicts sometimes, other times I took their comments as a joke

While Irene initially justifies her initial preference to attend Vocational Lyceum in terms of the importance of acquiring vocational-specific knowledge, in her argumentation features saliently her sense of being an 'alien' in an educational context predominantly Greek. It is worth mentioning that in her narrative the words most often used are "alien" and "conflict". This perspective resonates with the one articulated by the Palestinian participant Nur, with the difference being that Vocational Lyceum was excluded from Nur's educational horizons while the 'Foreigner's School' was regarded as her last, alternative option. In similar vein for Irene the Vocational Lyceum comes to be seen as the safer for her place, as a less racist environment. This is interlinked in Irene's view with the multiethnic composition of Vocational Lyceum's student population and the presence of the vast majority of her co-ethnic peers.

Moreover, according to the previous extract, her relationships with her teachers and peers are experienced as rather confrontational, fact that she attributes to their behaviour

and manner of speech towards non-Greek students. In Irene's view the teachers are accounted on one hand as having partial attitudes towards students with very good attainment levels and on the other hand as merely delivering the lessons without interfering into matters, such as racist bullying. This situation accentuates her sense of not belonging in the school community and her feeling as an 'alien', as a non-equal member of Greek society. The conflict-ridden climate is alleviated only after ignoring any racist comments or taking them "as a joke", a tactic of avoiding opposition which is strongly advised by her parents to adopt:

I talk to parents when I am in conflict with classmates and teachers and they say 'why do you oppose to others? You may not be the only one who has the right on her side'. My mother says 'why do you react? You make it worse when you react for they see that they can make you angry and they will keep saying these all the time'. Now I try not to pay attention, to ignore them and they do not say anything

This situation is further compounded by Irene's devastating experience of academic 'failure' during the first year of Lyceum. She accounts 'when I had to repeat the first year everything was ruined'. The impact of this experience, captured by the verb 'ruin', had to be encountered for another time the following year when she had to repeat the main subject of the theoretical module, ancient Greek. This was also the fact that led her to change her previously preferred theoretical module for the positive one, which she considered easier.

Regarding her academic and occupational plans, it can be argued that they emerge as aligned to what she conceives reasonable and pragmatic to achieve, which is studying nursing in Higher Technological Education. She further comments on the career guidance course as not having any impact at all in her way of thinking about future occupational routes.

I previously wanted to follow the beautician or the nursing branch of the Vocational. Now I intend to enter Higher Technical Education Institution for nursing and maybe a private training school for becoming beautician

Her expectations do not appear to be influenced by her teachers, since she refers to the general lack of any personal and meaningful contact with them. What on the other hand seems to have played a vital role in shaping Irene's future orientations is her mother's expectations and insistence to set the goal of entrance in Higher Technical Education and the Nursing School in particular. It is worth elaborating at this point how the parental expectations are linked with Irene's heightened cognizance of the altered socio-economic status of her family. The current socio-economic reality of being migrants and the attendant downward mobility, as the by-product of their migrant-status, can be claimed to activate a process of adaptation of the educational and occupational expectations her parents have hitherto held for her. The dramatic change in living conditions appears to have activated a transformation to the parental dispositions towards their daughter's academic and occupational future. Along with these, the pre-migration context of their life in Russia seems to constitute for Irene a constant frame of comparison against which the present context of her family's life in Greece is conceptualized and her personal imagined future is visualized. In her words:

My mother tells me to follow nursing. Then she tells me, 'choose whatever you like', she does not want to influence me. If we were in Russia things, alright, would have been different. Now I would have been aiming at University. They would have told me to go for medicine- I am sure- and I would have liked to do so. There everything would have been different, because the learning is different; there you necessarily study. Everyone studies there. If I had to repeat a class it would have been a great shame. There you have to be a high-achieving student. The parents have a different occupation there, and a totally different here. There the school facilitates more the students' progress, whereas here the students go to tutorial schools and know better than the rest of us and hence the teachers ask them more. Those who have the financial affluence they can afford and go to preparatory schools but those who have not they cannot go. It is not easy here without preparatory lessons; I would like to attend also tutorial lessons but I can't. It is for economic reasons that I can't

Through the above account Irene voices her bitter acknowledgment that what determine her educational trajectory are not the opportunities and the deployment of strategies for academic advancement but a host of barriers and constraints. To be more specific, Irene finds herself part of an educational system which in her view does not facilitate and support young people's progress. Challenging the myth of free of education, she acutely criticizes the prevailing situation according to which the attendance of private tutorial lessons is acknowledged to be as the sine qua non requirement for academic success in Greek educational system. In this context the onus of educational responsibility lies heavily on the parents, who in proportion to their capitals can steer their offsprings academic paths. Irene's parents' downward mobility and their resultant financial strain do not allow them to mobilize economic resources in order to enable their daughter to attend private tutorial classes. Last but not least, their migrant status, their lack of proficiency in Greek and their heavy work schedules in manual and strenuous jobs deter them from helping Irene with her school-work and in general from devoting time for communication and monitoring. As she acknowledges:

My parents do not have the time to help me; they come very tired at home. They could not help me with the lessons because of the language; I cannot translate to them all the time

Irene's outlook for the future is saturated with a mixture of pessimism and pragmatism, as regards her employment opportunities. The latter are perceived to be blocked by the nepotism and discrimination which are thought to penetrate the Greek social fabric and render rather bleak the prospects of young people, like her, who are not in a favoured position of having social contacts capable of granting career opportunities. This is linked not only with her parents' position in the socio-economic ladder but also with her own status as a non-Greek migrant:

If I were in Georgia it would have been different. There the young people are occupied in whatever they have studied. Here it is difficult both for those who do have a degree and for those who do not. You have to have a contact [meso], to

have an acquaintance in order to find a post anywhere. Only those who have [a contact] find a job. For us who are not from Greece is not easy; it takes time for us to adapt and so on so forth, hence how and where can we find these sort of powerful acquaintances?

The analysis at this point turns to the accounts of two young male migrants, both from Georgia, Dimitri and Nickolas, who also attend the Comprehensive Lyceum. To start with **Dimitri** who is aged-nineteen and who migrated to Greece along his parents and his brother when he was around four and half-year-old and his brother six. His parents according to his perspective “*came to Greece for reasons mainly economic and in general, they migrated in order to make their lives better*”. With reference to parental educational background and occupational pre-migration statuses, he accounts that his mother had studied accountancy in University and had been working in the National Electricity Company in Georgia whereas his father completed secondary education and joined the Georgian army, without having gained a Higher Education degree. Currently in Greece his father works in constructions as a semi-skilled worker and his mother’s main occupation is housekeeping while doing as a supplementary home-based job as a tailor.

As regards the way he makes sense of himself, the salient dimension of his self-construction is his identification as an athlete and in specific as a football player. In relation with his ethno-national allegiances, Dimitri speaks of himself as Georgian in terms of his origin, place of birth and locus of his family genealogy, all of which seem to grant Georgia an indubitable, sentimental precedence:

First and foremost I am an athlete. I play football in a team. My ethnic descent is Georgian, I was born there; my parents are from there; all my relatives are there. Georgia is above all; is the first country in my heart; I like it here too, I love Greece but not as much as Georgia. I do not feel as a member of Greek society. I feel as an alien

As it becomes evident from the passage above, his Georgian ethnic belongingness is contrasted to his sense of alien-ness experienced in the Greek context. When Dimitri was probed further on the matter of his self-identification as an alien, despite his fifteen-year-long residence in Greece, he pays particular attention to the issue of racism and the matter citizenship, what he calls ‘papers issue’. The following exchange sheds further light on that:

R: I noticed that you speak of yourself as an ‘alien’

P: Yes although I am for fourteen years in Greece, since I was four, and now I am nineteen-years old. The papers are the reason. It would have been different if I had the Greek citizenship, the Greek Identity card, for I would be freer and I would lead my life better; whereas now you are an alien (ksenos), police officers stop you for identity verification, they take you in [the prison] and in general they make your life difficult and you do not feel free. More than this, is the way they treat aliens; they are racists; they scorn them; they do not treat them in the best of ways

The reason that Dimitri does not identify himself as a member of Greek society appears to be twofold: the first is related to his citizenship status as a foreigner, non European-Union national, which casts him in a state of having to renew his permit every second year and even worse, to undergo the regular verification controls and ‘visits’ to Police Stations. Dimitri, while alluding to the feelings of insecurity and shame caused by the above processes, speaks of his generic sense of leading a difficult, encumbered life marked by a sense of limited freedom. Secondly, he attaches equal or even more significance to the dimension of racist and scornful treatment that ‘aliens’ like himself receive.

At this point the analysis will shift to the exploration of his educational trajectory, with the emphasis placed on the decisions made over post-16 schooling and the perceived role his parents have played in these. Regarding his learner identity, Dimitri identifies himself as a pupil of average achievement during Primary and Secondary education.

Although he does not refer to any confrontations or tensions among his teachers and classmates, he however argues rather assertively about the role ethnicity plays in schooling. To validate his claim, Dimitri draws upon experiences in his immediate environment but abstains from referring to any possible personal experiences. To further flesh this out, he refers to the perceived biased handling his brother experienced by the teachers and the principal, when due to an increased number of absences he failed to graduate Comprehensive Lyceum, whereas one of his brother's classmates with same amount of absences, yet of Greek origin, finally mustered to graduate. Moreover Dimitri claims that the ethnic background of a student influences teachers' marking, opinion that was also expressed by Eleanor, Vicky and Nur. Last but not least Dimitri substantiates his claim for the unequal treatment migrant young people experience, by recounting an incident during which an Albanian student was treated in the most diminishing manner by his teacher:

I believe that ethnicity plays a role not just in my case but in other aliens' cases too. My brother for instance during the final grade of Comprehensive Lyceum had the same number of absences with another student who was Greek; and because the other guy was in the schools' team they passed him whereas they failed my brother. I believe that it plays also a role in the way teachers mark and in what marks give to whom. I have also heard a teacher saying to a guy who was from Albania- a good and quiet fellow- and the teacher was saying in the classroom 'you, Albanian, shut up'; the teachers in general treated him very badly

As regards the choice of post-compulsory type of school, Dimitri seems to have taken into consideration the path of Vocational Lyceum since it was perceived as the least academically demanding option which had the extra advantage of an occupation-specific curriculum. Despite this, the distance of the Vocational Lyceum from his home operated as a deterrent from finally attending it. By contrast Dimitri opted for the Comprehensive Lyceum which was closest to his home and thereby saving him time from commuting; time that he wanted to invest in the significant for him football training.

In the beginning I wanted to go to Vocational Lyceum for becoming a car mechanic for I like cars. The Vocational Lyceum – I do not know- I was thinking of it as easier because you study in the vocation you want and just that, whereas now, I do not know. The Vocational though was a bit far from our home; the Comprehensive was almost opposite and this is the school I also came for Gymnasium; the same building block. I did not have so much time for commuting because I had the football; I was going for training, I was going to the Gym; we were travelling with the team often for preparation, for tournaments and I did not want to spend time; so I thought to continue in Comprehensive. I did not want to go Vocational Lyceum for the sake of football. I have done for the sake of football many things; I have even stopped studying for school

Probing further on his perception over the unequal academic standing that Vocational and Comprehensive have, he continues arguing about the higher standards and difficulty level that seem to characterize the institutional habitus of the latter. It is noteworthy that Dimitri refers to the role of teachers in urging those young people who have below average achievement in core subjects to follow the path of Vocational Lyceum, on the grounds of the vocation-specific and thus easier to cope with curriculum. Despite the influence exerted by teachers, Dimitri regards Vocational Lyceum as a distinct institutional route that offers clear-cut educational and occupational prospects. In his words:

No matter what they say, it is a different thing to go to Vocational Lyceum and another to continue to Comprehensive and enter University. I believe that through Comprehensive is more difficult, this is why most of young people found themselves in Vocational. I have heard teachers telling students to go to Vocational because it is better occupation-wise. I do not know their way of thinking; maybe they were seeing that they did not manage it so well in specific subjects like Ancient Greek, Mathematics, Physics that require much study and they were telling them to go to Vocational

With reference to his friends' post-16 decisions, Dimitri states that most of them are in Vocational Lyceum and only a few in Comprehensive. He speaks of the negative experiences his close friends had in Gymnasium and their repeated 'failures' to pass the grades. Their disappointment and frustration with the teachers' evaluation and treatment were such that in Dimitri's view, that they were bereft of any motivation to continue schooling at all. Finally, in their cases Vocational Lyceum featured as the last educational recourse, by giving them their final chance to remain in education. Dimitri's brother had also a similar experience, when as it has been noted, he had to repeat the final grade of Comprehensive Lyceum; yet his hopes were so much curtailed by his teachers that he decided to join a Vocational Training School instead.

What is pertinent to explore at this point is the perceived role that Dimitri's parents have played in his decision-making and his educational route in general. The young man recounts the particulars of the parental involvement as trammelled by financial strains and language difficulties, element that resonates with the afore-analyzed narrative of Irene. The parental migrant status along with the downward mobility and the engendered scarcity of economic resources seems to set the context and draw the limits of parental engagement.

Two things worth highlighting at this point: firstly, the parental stance towards their offspring educational matters is characterized at the first period of their stay in Greece by unanimity as regards the strictness of monitoring and the high expectations concerning their children's future. Education in this schema is seen as the sole fulcrum of social mobility and respectability, of 'becoming someone'. Secondly, in the course of time the unanimity in parental stance seems to have given ground to a dissonance, characteristically exemplified in the verbatim phrases Dimitri quotes below. To be more specific, this discordance can be rooted at the adaptation of paternal expectations to the new conditions of their family's lived realities in Greece, as constrained the latter by their semi-legal status, their financial struggle, the linguistic difficulties and the racism they had to face. This web of hindrances might have contributed to the cooling-down of paternal expectations and the fitting to what is pragmatic to expect.

On the other hand, Dimitri's mother's intense involvement with his own and his brother's school progress is manifest mainly at a normative level and in particular through her attempts to instil into her offspring the value of having a Higher Education degree. Moreover she has been providing help with their homework "*as much as she could*", according to Dimitri's emphatic claim; while she has been closely monitoring their progress and pressurizing them to study harder:

When we were younger, because we did not have the luxuries, the comfort, our parents were strict with us concerning school. They were telling us to study so as to learn something, to become something. In the beginning my parents had expectations; they were saying 'study, study in order to become something'. They know all our friends and always they know what we are doing and where we are and with whom. My mother helped me with school as much as she could, for they do not know the language so well. She was helping me and my brother as much as she could; my father not so much since both of them work but my mother works from home. And she was telling me to study; she was putting pressure on me. This is because my mother pays attention and significance to my progress in school; my father does not to such a degree. He says 'leave the child alone! Is he going to be doctor or lawyer?' Whereas my mother says 'leave him to gain a degree because you cannot make it without a paper in your hand'.

His mother's shaping power was more evident, as Dimitri admits, in his brother's case. In more detail, Dimitri's brother wanted to join a Vocational Training School in order to become a chef, his parents though, being cautious with his occupational choice, did not allow him to do so but urge him to study Applied Computing instead. Dimitri states that his brother was influenced mostly by their mother, who appears to steer her son's occupational plans through the medium of discussion and negotiation:

We have discussed with our parents for Higher Education Schools and he concluded that he wants to enter into Higher Technological Institution to study applied computing. He now studies and tries hard

On the other side, for Dimitri the sway of his father over his athletic orientation is accounted to be equally fundamental. Dimitri's predilection for football was nurtured from a small age by his father, with whom he spends a lot of time discussing and sharing his dreams and concerns. The paternal ambition of becoming his son a professional football player seems to have decidedly contributed to the formation of Dimitri's own dispositions towards his future:

I discuss with my father many times, not so much with my mother. My father spends very much time with me since I was at a very small age because of the football. When I started six-year-old to play football, he was the one to help me. I play in the second team of Kalamaria; I started playing there since then and I have not left yet. I had passion for it. He was helping me very much; they were giving some money to the team for clothes, shoes, materials. My father even put me in the team; where my father was working, his boss knew the coach of the team and through this way I got in. I may sign now with a better team. My father wants me to become a professional player, to sign a contract with a team and to have a comfort money-wise; the same does my mother

As it has been noted from the onset, as much his sense of self as his envisaged future revolves around his identification as an athlete. His personal notion of success is closely linked with the attractive package of fame and money that sports elites enjoy. His aspiration and expectation to become a professional player is thought of as an achievement that will satisfy his parents' dream for him. Furthermore, his mother's insistence on the value of a Higher Education degree has also played its part in taking into consideration and integrating into his plans the study of mechanics, more as a second-rate, alternative path:

If I find a team and sign a contract and then football then becomes my occupation -for only when you sign a contract you become professional- when I manage this, I would say that I am successful; but not irrespectively from the league that this team will be playing. My parents' dream is to see me on

television. My mother tells me and insists to enter Higher Technological Education and take a degree in mechanics, because I was telling that I like it too

What becomes evident yet for another time in Dimitri's narrative is the way his identified 'alien-ness', mediates his future envisioning. It is at this point that Dimitri makes reference again to the trammels of racism, affecting as it has been illustrated, his past, his present and his emergent future. Interestingly, he speaks of the racist treatment Black friends receive on the basis of their skin color. While others, such as Georgians, Russians and Albanians receive similar scornful and debasing manner on the grounds of their language and their accent when speaking Greek. There is however one field in which the whole 'game' of racism is thought by Dimitri to be inverted, and that is the field of sports, in which not having the dominant ethnicity can be contrariwise regarded as a valuable resource:

In general I wish racism did not exist to such a great extent. There is racism for the color; the blacks, the Chinese; I have friends who are black and I know how they are treated. There is racism for the language, the Russian, the Georgian, the Albanian, they scorn them and say 'how do you speak like that? What is this language?' We have also a different accent when we speak Greek; and other things relevant to these. Despite these, because I am an athlete and in Greece they admire more the foreigner players, the Brazilians, the Spanish, the French, I do not think I will have any problem regarding my profession

The narrative analysis of the migrant young people attending Comprehensive Lyceum comes to an end with the case of eighteen-year-old **Nickolas**, who, like Dimitri and Irene, comes also from Georgia. Nickolas's familial migration history is though rather more complicated as his account unveils. His parents after having been for many months unpaid due to their country's bankruptcy migrated from Georgia to Russia where they stayed for two years. However, the socio-economic situation in Russia during that period necessitated them to migrate again, this time to the south of Europe, to Greece. Nickolas recounts:

My father was a police officer in Georgia. My mother had studied mathematics and had been working in a factory as accountant. When she gave birth she quitted her job because they did not pay her and my father was also for eight months unpaid. The same thing was going on all the time and we went to Russia, we stayed two years there, but because things were not that good either, we came to Greece, to Thessaloniki. Two years after we moved to a different area close to where my parents found a job

As the above passage illustrates, Nickolas's parents after facing extreme situations of financial strain, they found themselves left with no other course of action but the one of uprooting and migration. Although his father was in Georgia a police officer and his mother an accountant, they did not manage to find relevant jobs in Greece, according to their credentials and their previous working experience; by contrast, they both work in a hotel, his father as a guard and his mother covering various posts either as a receptionist or as a cashier.

His family's migration to Greece when Nickolas was ten-year-old, is conceived as a sacrifice made by his parents for the sake of Nickolas's and his younger sister's future, a conceptualization that permeates his whole narrative. As it has been underlined, Nickolas' parents like Irene's and Dimitri's, experience downward socio-economic mobility as a by-product of their migration. This fact, in combination with other factors at work, seems to lead Nickolas to speak of a generational difference concerning the current well-being of his parents as compared to his own and his younger sister. In the following passage he draws a distinctive line between his personal and his sister's better future brought about by migration, as opposed to their parents' immense adaptation difficulties and financial struggle in the host country. The latter are construed as challenging the generic discourse of migration for a better life:

My father is eight years here and he still does not speak Greek so well; he does not go out that often; he is staying home. I believe that they want to be in their country, with their relatives – I believe everybody does- and my mother wants

that too. Whereas me, I brought up here, I know people and so on. It is difficult for older people when they migrate to a foreign country –my father is forty one- I believe it is very difficult. And they came here simply in order their children to be better, only for our [with emphasis] sake, for us to be better

Nickolas makes sense himself along the lines of the familial, local- and national-specific context within which his lived reality is rooted. He speaks of himself as a member of a certain family that is situated in a certain locale, which in turn is part of a certain country. On the other hand, he identifies himself as a migrant, a notion that seems to be inexorably linked with his non-Greek ethnic origin and his felt ‘alien-ness’. The extract below attests to the centrality of his migrant positionality in the process of making sense of himself. As he characteristically puts it:

I am part of the locality I live, of my family and of the country I live. For who I am it is important the fact that I am migrant; that I am alien [ksenos]. I am not from here; I do not descent from here. It is a different thing to be in your motherland and do what you want. Nobody can tell you that you are an alien, that you come from your country and you mess around here

As regards his ethno-national allegiances, although Nickolas does not identify himself as Georgian, he refers to Georgia as his parents’ motherland and as his own country of origin. It is noteworthy however that he does articulate his intention of not returning back to Georgia, since for him it constitutes only a place to visit and not to settle. In an attempt, one could argue, to counter-balance the latter, Nickolas emphatically and with a rather apologetic manner, declares his love for his country and his intention not to ever forget his mother tongue. He even speaks of his hitherto held plan to get into politics in Georgia. Notwithstanding all these, Nickolas future orientation features to be tied with his stay in Greece. In his words:

Georgia is the country of my parents, and I love it despite that I have not lived many years there. In the past I was thinking of going back to Georgia and do something there; I wanted to get into politics but with the war everything was

turned upside-down there. Now, I would like to be visiting and staying there not for ever but for while. I love my motherland and there is no case of ever forgetting my language Georgian, ever; it is just that I would not particularly like the idea of going back- I am fine here- but I like going back and visit my relatives

It is pertinent at this point to unpack Nickolas's sense of belonging into Greek society. The following passage could be argued to depict a process of evolving adaptation to the Greek context, in which he seems to enjoy living, fact that is associated as much with his growing familiarity with it as with his formed network of friends. It is worth underlining that his previously mentioned identification as an 'alien' is interestingly juxtaposed by his peers' friendly treatment, a treatment that is not befitted, in his view, to an "alien" like him. His perceived 'alien-ness' is attributed mainly to the matter of "papers", notably to the semi-legal and semi-permanent status that he and his family members enjoy as non-European Union nationals. Despite the issue of acquiring citizenship, his overall positionality in terms of belonging can be characterized as rather positive:

I like it here; I got used here; it is different. I am here with the lads and they do not consider me an alien; they do not treat like an alien. I have made friends, I have company, I have known people; I like many places here and the environment also. It is just that I want citizenship, so I will not have these papers, and the one and the other all the time; things that make our life difficult

A key person to his family's adaptation process in Greece is accounted by Nickolas to be his parents' employer, who then became his godfather. This constitutes a shared element, experienced by other young people as well, mainly Albanian, whose narratives will be analyzed in the following chapter. It needs also pointing that Nickolas comes from a Christian- Orthodox family, so his baptism did not mark his conversion into a different faith but the ritualistic affirmation of his Christian faith. Nickolas narrates the particulars of his baptism by a Greek man who is the employer and the owner of the

hotel business where both of his parents work and is admired for his achieved educational and economic status:

My parents met with my godfather here in Thessaloniki and he liked them very much. At some point it was planned to travel back to Georgia for my baptism – for we get baptized in Georgia quite older, aged eight to ten - but because we could not go he proposed to baptize me here. He likes me and this is also why he baptized me [pause] he is a very nice guy; he is wealthy and very educated, he has many degrees

Shifting now to Nickolas's educational history, it merits highlighting from the onset that his trajectory is similarly fractured and marked by multiple transitions. Nickolas indeed has experienced many changes in the early years of his life for which he maintains: "*All these changes [pause] are not the nicest thing; it is better to live in your own country, in your motherland*". More specifically, he started Primary education in Georgia; then after his family's migration to Russia he did the second and third grade there and finally after their move to Greece he was placed again in the third grade of Primary. Without his parent's having the required documents for his enrolment in a Greek school, he was finally enrolled in the third grade by a head-teacher who facilitated his registration. Then he accounts "*my parents fixed the [document] papers and fortunately I am now in Lyceum*".

Nickolas' school experiences are recounted in quite positive terms without any reference to racist name-calling or bullying, as narrated by other young people. Moreover he considers himself as a wholly accepted member of the school community, having made many friends among his Greek peers and participating in extra-curricular activities, such as the school's basketball team. As he claims, his sense of being an 'alien' is completely back-grounded in the school context, owing to the acceptance and integration he experiences in the Lyceum's community life. It is worth paying attention to the fact that Nickolas acknowledges that his sense of acceptance cannot be extended beyond school;

on the contrary it is perceived as context-specific and bound to be inverted and challenged by the prevailing situation in Greek society. Nickolas says:

I don't feel as an alien in school. I have friends; nobody gets angry at me or quarrels with me. I know all of them, and I have good relations with all; but in society outside school I know it is different, for there is racism

Shifting the attention now to the process of decision-taking Nickolas is engaged with as regards the choice of post-16 schooling, it can be claimed that this bears similarities with the respective ones accounted by the high-achieving students, Vicky and Nur. For Nickolas alike the option of Vocational Lyceum was entirely ruled-out and not considered at all. The following extract sets out the personal contours of his decision to attend Comprehensive Lyceum and points to an array of factors that play dominant role in the process:

In general I wanted to go to Comprehensive; I liked more the Comprehensive. I did not like the Vocational anyway; it was where all the badly achieving students go. I wanted to enter into Higher Education through Comprehensive and the Vocational did not suit me, for I did not like the Schools that you can enter through Vocational; there you become Electrician and so on. Those I know from Vocational, if you ask them what five plus five equals, they will say fifteen. Alright, it is not that I get crazy with being a high-achieving pupil but I want to finish and enter into a good School in Higher Education. This year I say to myself to study very much and not to go out so often so that I will achieve to enter into Higher Education

It becomes evident from this quote that Nickolas's learner identity had an important part in his decision to follow the path of Comprehensive schooling. On one hand he dissociates himself from the category of "bad pupils", who are perceived by him as if following almost by nature their befitted route through Vocational Lyceum. On the other hand he also appears fast in distancing himself from the "swots", the obsessed with achieving high marks students. In addition to the dissociation from the less academically

able students, Nickolas seems to have a clear envisioning of what he does *not* want to become occupation-wise. From his occupational horizon are precluded all the options that in his view Vocational Lyceum has to offer, since the latter are merely thought of as not suitable for him. By contrast, entering into Higher Education is elevated to the ultimate goal while Comprehensive Lyceum likewise features as the most legitimate route leading to it.

At the other end of this spectrum lie Nickolas's friends, whose educational routes are referred as following exclusively the Vocational Lyceum's path. It is exactly his peers' choices that embody what Nickolas wishes to dissociate himself from; and that is becoming a semi-skilled manual labourer. This links well with another factor that appears to have decidedly contributed to the shaping of Nickolas's route, namely his parents' expectations and stance towards his educational career. This is the theme to which the analysis will now shift.

In more detail, Nickolas's parents, and especially his mother, are depicted as being rather strict and adamant concerning the decision at the significant educational cross-roads after Gymnasium. Nickolas' mother wishes and expects her son to be an "educated person". Interestingly the Vocational Lyceum is not perceived by her as the legitimate educational course for achieving this ideal, hence in her perspective it cannot be seen anything but altogether unsuitable for Nickolas. It is interesting to follow in the extract below his argumentation line which heavily draws on morally-laden, stereotypical discourses and assumptions while making normative classifications and distinctions:

My mother wants me to be educated and the fact that I came to Comprehensive was due to my mother who was telling me 'do you want to go to Vocational? What are you going to do there?' [with belittling manner] My parents were discussing about it and they saw that -how can I say it- all the tramps go there. Whoever vagrants I knew, it was the Vocational that they attended. 'What are you going to do there', my mother was asking, 'your teachers tell me that you are good, if you sit down and study you will be fine'

The decision making process over post-compulsory Lyceum in Nickolas' case was dealt as a family matter, and a key role in that played the information gleaned from his family's social network. In specific, his parents are accounted to hold discussions solely with 'educated' individuals. The latter are persons with high cultural capital in form of credentials, whose opinion appears to have weighed import regarding the education matters at hand. Among those Nickolas' godfather is accounted to have a prominent position, as being not only a highly educated person, and hence wholly respected, but also a significant other who cares for Nickolas' academic and occupational progress:

All of those they asked about the schools- for only the educated persons asked about it- told them for Comprehensive. The only person that could sway over my mother's opinion is my godfather and they discussed it of course with him; he is very educated, he has many degrees. He also surely played a role towards going to Comprehensive. He was saying 'I can see Nickolas getting ahead'; he likes me and he cares about me. He thus influenced my parents

Nickolas' parents are intensely involved in his educational affairs, with his mother specifically playing a dominant role in that. She, as Nickolas details, has regular contact with the school's staff in an attempt to monitor closely his own and his sister's progress. Moreover she is helping him with his homework all the way through Lyceum, especially in subjects such as mathematics, physics and chemistry that she has a sound background due to her own studies as a Mathematician. However, once Nickolas joined Comprehensive Lyceum, the advanced level of courses rendered the whole process of tutoring by his mother, with the translation of terminologies and explanations, rather time-consuming and perplexed. As a result he was advised and steered by his mother to start taking in addition private tutorial lessons so as to get prepared for the highly demanding examinations for University entry. Towards the realization of this goal his parents mobilize a great fragment of the economic resources available at their disposal. The young man states:

During Gymnasium my mother was helping me a lot. When in Comprehensive she told me that it is better to go to a tutorial school because she cannot understand so well in Greek all the axioms and principles and she said ‘ I cannot explain you these for I have to tell you all these in Georgian and then to translate it; it is difficult and complicated’. My parents do whatever they can; they pay as many tutorial lessons as they can; they spend six hundred Euros every month only for my tutorial lessons

His parents’ involvement is manifest in the form of providing academic help to Nickolas, of monitoring his progress through school visits and more importantly through investing valuable economic capital for his tutoring. In addition to these, the normative dimension of parental engagement is also significant. To put more flesh into that, Nickolas’s parents expect from him to study hard so as to achieve the access into what they perceive as a ‘good’, well-respected Higher Education Department. While his parents had hitherto held high expectations for their son, aspiring for him to enter into Medicine School, they currently do not set specific goals for him, apart from not entering into the low-prestige Higher Technological Institutions .The channelling of their expectations occurs through the medium of daily discussions on schooling matters but also through exhorting Nickolas to study harder in order to avoid becoming like them, namely labourers in semi-skilled, routine jobs. The immense value attached to University credentials and education in general is evident and well captured in the maternal admonitions, which are recounted verbatim by Nickolas as following: “*Study to become someone, so as not to become like us; if you do not study, you are lost.*” The following passage adds further light to the aforementioned dimensions:

When I was younger my parents were telling ‘study to become a doctor’. Now they want me to achieve good credit points in exams and enter into a good University, wherever I want but not in some Technological Institution with eight thousands credits. They tell me ‘sit down and study’, they do whatever they can. They tell me that they do not want me to become like them; to work with a boss over their head to tell you ‘do that, do the other’; it is not the nicest thing. My

mother tells me 'if you do not study, you are lost; study to become something so as not to be like us'. Every parent I believe has dreams for his child. Now I want to achieve good marks in the exams, so as I can tell them that they did not pay so much money in vain

The concluding phrase of the passage brings to the fore another issue also evident in most of the migrant young people's narratives, which is the sense of indebtedness intensely felt by Nickolas towards his parents. The fact of migration per se is viewed, as it has been previously mentioned, as a form of 'sacrifice' that parents make for the sake of their offspring's future. As Nickolas emphatically claims, his parents "*do whatever they can*" to smooth his way to upward social mobility by bolstering his educational performance and raising his expectations. In this normative frame achieving the goal of University entrance corresponds to and makes up for all the things his parents do for their son's better future. It is thus elevated to the sole, approved way that can ratify and prove worthwhile the family's uprooting and parental downward mobility.

Nickolas' own educational and occupational expectations for his future appear to have been swayed over by his familial habitus and the strong family background in mathematics, since most members of his extended family are mathematicians. In the quote below he speaks of his expectations and preferences ranging from the natural for him option of studying mathematics, to the wished for but difficult to achieve aeronautics engineering or finally the least prestigious and hence least desired automobile mechanics:

I do like the School of Mathematics. I like mathematics; I wrote 19, 8/20 in the exams. My mother also studied mathematics and all the family from my mother's side are mathematicians and I like it too. I wanted also to go for aeronautics engineering. Now that I have reached thus far I saw that it requires very high marks and it will not be possible. I 'd like to be an automobile mechanic too and there is a Higher Technological Institution for that as well; if I do not go so well

in the exams I may go there. My goal though is to achieve good credits point in National Exams. I do not know; wherever I enter

It is illuminating at this point to explore the way Nickolas envisages his future. As the following passage indicates his personal envisioning involves first and foremost University studies, a job according to his credentials and family-creation at a relatively young age. It can be claimed that his notion of success is a rather family-centred one, revolving as much around the well-being of his parents as around the vividly imagined family of his own. Concerning all these envisioning he admits the parental legacy to be of great shaping potency:

I want to enter into a good University, to find a relevant job; to buy my own house and to know that my parents are in a well off state and if they are not, to help them; I want to make a family; then I will say that I am fine. I do not want to marry old, like twenty nine –thirty. I think to finish University around twenty-two, twenty-three, to work for a year or more, to better myself financially and then marry early. I do not want to have big age distance with my children. I am very close to my parents age-wise and I like that, I would like to be close to my children too – I like children indeed- my parents have influenced me in that. I cannot understand in what my parents have influenced me and in what they have not but I know that in all respects they have somehow influenced me

In more detail, Nickolas's future envisioning can be captured as revolving around two opposite focal points. On one hand he wishes to avoid his parents' occupational positions in the semi-skilled, routine jobs, typical for their status as migrants in Greece. By contrast, he admires and sets his godfather's career as a model of educational and professional success. The young man makes an interesting claim when, after setting his godfather's trajectory as a yardstick, he characteristically speaks of his own positionality as one that starts from "point zero". Nickolas seems to realize the unequal nature of the vantage points that he and his godfather stand, given the so disparate economic, social and symbolic legacies bequeathed upon them.

Regarding his employment prospects Nickolas acknowledges, like the participants mentioned so far, that without the necessary social contacts and connections the employment opportunities are extremely limited. The anticipation of this kind of structural impediments does not seem though to curtail his confidence and optimism for the future ahead. To further substantiate that, Nickolas reckons that his godfather can play a key-role as an opportunity-broker, through capitalizing on his affluent cultural, social and economic capitals. The young man expects that this kind of intimate relation he shares with his godfather has the capacity of providing valuable help in navigating and overcoming the barriers of nepotism and lack of meritocracy. This can be done through his godfather's wide and affluent in economic capital social network or more directly through offering him a job position in his businesses:

I know that when I finish studying it will be very difficult to find a job on my own; you need to have a 'contact' [meso]. However I think I will find a job because I have my godfather and he has many powerful contacts or he can always put me in one of his businesses. He has achieved many things in his life with his brain. I want to reach where he reached but I cannot do that to such a degree because he had a fortune when he started; I will start from point zero; I have to build up from point zero and it is something difficult [pause] I will try. I will make it somehow. I have the impression that I will make it; I will not become like my parents – I do not know I have this sense- I will not be like them ; I will never work in this way like them; I do not want to work in this way. All those who made it were they so superior?

Conclusion

The narratives of Eleanor, Vicky, Nur, Irene, Dimitri and Nickolas have illuminated the intricate web that is entwined by migration and educational policies, familial migration

histories, identifications and positionalities and the local, interactional context of the given school community.

It is notable that for Eleanor, Irene, Dimitri and Nur their ethnic identifications were cross-cut by a sense of alien-ness felt with reference to their belonging in the host society. Eleanor in particular while she underlined her ethnic allegiance and emotional affinity to Albania, she also spoke of her double sense of alien-ness as regards both the society of country and Greek society. It was only in the cases of Vicky and Nickolas, who referred to their countries as not their own motherlands but their parents' ones and whose lack of belonging-ness in their countries of origin was explicitly stated. Moreover the word "alien" featured centrally in all the narratives of this group of migrant people, with the only exception being Vicky. The rest of them referred to a host of barriers that seemed to rebuff their claims of belonging to the Greek society. Among the more fundamental of these hindrances were the racism as manifested in Greek people's attitudes and their semi-legal, semi-permanent status of residence.

It needs to be highlighted that the sense of not belonging and the racism were also experienced by these young people in the school context. Nur and Eleanor provided emotionally-charged accounts of their personal experiences of racist bullying and name-calling by their peers, practices that made them feel other-defined and inferiorized. In addition they also made reference to the passive and non-intervening stance of the teachers adopted as further exacerbating their sense of not-belonging-ness. This is resonant with Rattansi's studies (1992, p.21) who has noted a tendency on behalf of teachers to ignore or deny reports of racial violence, colluding in this way, as it is argued, with "racialized processes". Furthermore, the two Albanian women, Eleanor and Vicky, along with Dimitri and Nur and Irene, criticized their teachers' partiality, as this was perceived to take shape through their overall behaviour and their marking practices towards non-Greek students, including themselves. Gillborn's argument seems all the more apt at this point when he argues that teachers "play an active (although unintentional) role in the processes that structure the educational opportunities of minority students" (1995, p.42).

It can be plausibly argued that the educational decisions these young people made regarding their transitions to post-compulsory schooling were not one-off individual-centred events, but instead long-running processes, that only culminated at specific pre-fixed points. The choice of Lyceum can itself be seen as rooted in familial histories and individual biographies, and then re-buffed by the institutional realities of the school community. In addition this process can be pictured as a social site in which capitals were activated, familial habituses were brought into play, and discourses and myths were mobilized.

In more detail, young people's families appeared to be intensely involved in discussing and negotiating with them as regards the perceived consequences, the gains and risks that the two available educational paths of Vocational and Comprehensive Lyceum entail. For Eleanor, Irene, Dimitri and Nickolas who were involved in the choice-making process, it was a mixture of factors that made the Vocational Lyceum not the appropriate educational environment for them. It needs to be reminded that their achievement levels were for Eleanor quite high, for Nickolas average and for Irene and Dimitri below average. For Irene and Dimitri the easier, occupational-specific curriculum was mentioned as a factor that was taken on board in the choice-taking process. Moreover, their peers' choices, was probably the single most important factor for considering the path of Vocational Lyceum at the first place. Irene explicitly perceives Vocational Lyceum as a less racist place to be, due to its multi-ethnic composition and the presence of her co-ethnic peers, Eleanor too, despite her high attainment levels, considered Vocational because her peers were intending to attend it, consideration which in retrospect was condemned as "foolish" given her achievement and her occupational expectations. Both of these cases indicate that the factor of ethnic mix enjoys a central, yet not dominant, position in the choice-making regarding schools (see also Ball *et al*, 2002).

All the migrant young people referred to the factor of geographic distance between their homes and the closest Vocational Lyceum along with a host of other factors that they seemed to be drawn upon widely-circulated discourses such as: the laxity and the low academic standards that they thought of as prevailing in the Vocational school ethos; the risks of ‘social mixing’ with the young people who usually attend it and who were constructed on one hand as more inclined to violence and substance abuse, and on the other as insolent, disrespectful and academically disinclined . The above postulates figured as the prominent discourses used by their parents in their attempts to frame and steer their offspring educational paths and in turn seemed to have been internalized and/or reproduced as discursive material by the young people themselves.

For Nur and Vicky however there were no decision-making processes involved concerning this issue. Nur perceived Vocational schooling as having no legitimacy as an alternative route, not least because of its absence from the Palestinian, educational system which Nur has as a main frame of reference. For Vicky the unsuitability of Vocational Lyceum was gradually being constructed while she was forming her learner identity as a high-achiever and while she was decoding “*what school is all about*”; through this process she was acquiring the dispositions to pursue what she perceived as “proper education” for people like her, who are eager to learn and work persistently hard.

Overall, the choice of post-16 schooling features in the narratives of migrant young people as tightly linked with their expectation to enter University and their aspired occupational careers. More importantly it is about making classed distinctions (Bourdieu, 1986) through deciding who *not* to be and who they want to become, in terms of their occupational and academic identity. In this respect, the parallels with the Greek youths’ accounts are rather unambiguous to the degree that “occupation, status and identity are inextricably interwoven” (Ball *et al*, 2000, p.7) for both of these groups of young people.

This group of migrant young people like their Greek peers seemed acutely aware of the Greek opportunity structure and the 'blocked opportunities' that were available to them. They similarly voiced their disbelief in meritocracy and their acknowledgement that getting ahead in the Greek society requires ('meso') social connections, which mediate and assign positions in the context of partisanship patronage. Additionally, in a receiving society characterized by racist and discriminatory attitudes towards migrants, they expected to be discriminated against in the labour market. Seen in this light, the distrust and pessimism that seemed to imbue their envisaged futures looks all the more pragmatically based.

Chapter 8

GREEK YOUNG PEOPLE CHOOSING VOCATIONAL LYCEUM

This chapter analyzes the narratives of five Greek young people, John, Jim, Nathan, Stephanie and George, all of whom attend the Vocational Lyceum. The aim of this chapter is to explore the decision-making process in which these young people are involved as regards their post-16 educational routes, by mapping out how it is cross-cut with the young people's evolving identifications, their social positions and their future envisioning. In addition, their learner identities are examined as formed inter-subjectively through the course of their educational histories. The material and experiential frame within which the narratives of educational choices and expectations are shaped is thoroughly looked into, while particular attention is paid to the socio-culturally conditioned dispositions and resources that young people possess and bring into play.

The first to start with is the case of **John** who is seventeen-year old and lives with his parents and his older brother. His father used to work as a coalminer but after losing his job he receives an allowance by the recently closed down company and works as a waiter in a hotel. His mother is housewife. As regards their educational background, his parents completed upper-secondary schooling but did not have any experience of Higher or Further Education. His brother is twenty-years old and after graduating from Comprehensive Lyceum he studies computer science in University.

Fleshing out John's self-narrative, this can be said to revolve around his ethnic and religious identifications as a Christian-Orthodox Greek, articulated the latter with an evident certitude and self-assurance. In particular John speaks of his ethno-national positioning as central to the sense of who he is, granting him at the same time a sense of belonging to a socio-political community. This bond, for John apart from its civic

dimension, also serves as a potent reference to history and language. It needs to be highlighted that the bonds to the Greek, historic and linguistic community do not emerge as given and fixed, but rather they are subjectively felt through a process that entails the ebb and flow of emotional investment. In John's words:

The religion, that I am a Christian-Orthodox, is very important to who I am. That I am Greek is self-evident that is the most important of all to me; the fact that we have this history, we speak this language. It means that I belong in a political and social group. Nowadays, I reckon that we do not pay so much attention to learning how to speak better the Greek language, to learn the Greek history. We learn other languages and we forget what we know. This is why we have the national celebrations, to be reminded of these great historic days and all these our ancestors have done for us [...]

Shifting now to his account of his educational trajectory, John speaks of himself as a pupil of average achievement, namely of 15/20, and as one of those students who, as he says, “do not study so much”. At this point it is pertinent to refer also to John's overall account of his relationships with his teachers throughout his secondary schooling. These are experienced and narrated as fraught with confrontation and conflict. In particular he speaks of the favouritism and the unfair assessment practiced by the educators, while he criticizes the critical absence of conversation and “democracy” from the classroom:

We were daily in conflict; we were and we are still arguing with the teachers. I mean to say that even if they do or not acknowledge it, there are likings; that is, they behave differently towards me and differently towards other classmates of mine; it is obvious. This cannot be happening. They cannot just assess differently the same things; for you write the same things with others and they mark you differently. Teachers also tell their opinions in the class without allowing us to speak; there is no democracy in the classroom; they are the only ones who speak. This is dictatorship [...] I just want to finish and get out from here.

Among the incidents that had a bearing upon the making of his learner identity seems to be his perceived failure in mathematics in the final grade of Gymnasium (grade 9) when John was fifteen. His attendant frustration with his mathematics' teacher figures centrally in his narrative and appears to have played a crucial role in his decision not to take the risky choice of following Comprehensive Lyceum. In this way John's case exemplifies how intense the effect of the experienced 'failure' in a core subject can be, especially at this point of transition before Lyceum.

Exploring further the decision-making process, John draws upon his brother's first-hand experience of Comprehensive Lyceum to further construct his own viewpoint on the matter of available educational paths. In that sense, his brother operates as a source of 'hot' knowledge (Ball and Vincent, 1998) that seems to consolidate John's view of Comprehensive Lyceum as a demanding school environment which is not suitable for those whose learner identity is other-defined as failing. In this frame is not surprising that John felt as if he were left with no room for choice between Vocational and Comprehensive Lyceum:

I did not have any other choice. I did not go to Comprehensive because I knew that it would not be possible even to pass the class, therefore I said to myself should I waste so many years in vain, why? I knew it since I was in Gymnasium; things were that simple [while laughing]. My brother was attending Comprehensive by that time hence I knew what was going there, ancient Greek, Latin, advanced physics and mathematics. He knew how I was getting on during Gymnasium. In the third grade I failed in mathematics, no, I did not fail, the teacher failed me. Therefore Vocational is good for all of us who do not study much.

A process of self-exclusion can be traced out in the extract above that is being triggered by experiences of school failure and in turn triggering the re-formation of his scholastic dispositions. However, the dynamics of choice-making over the types of post-16 schooling is not exhausted to this process of self-elimination from the academic path. By

contrast, it is also evident the clear link that connects the Vocational Lyceum with John's future educational and occupational plans.

More specifically, John aspires to enter Higher Education and it is his cousin's inside-knowledge of the Vocational Lyceum and the prospects it opens up for studies in Higher Technological Education that he utilizes to further shape his plans. In addition, John has a vivid image of his occupational future as revolving around the nodal line of who he does *not* want to become. This mainly refers to the rejection of the training that Vocational lyceum offers in manual /technical specializations in plumbing, electrics and mechanics, since these are perceived as not suitable for him. By contrast John considers the options of studying business administration, accountancy and advertising, in terms of future employment prospects and economic reward while he strongly dissociates himself from the traditional, working-class occupational routes. Discussing with teachers is also useful for him in order to make up his mind for the best possible professional options. The following exchange sheds light on this process:

I came here with the goal to enter into a Higher Technological School. My cousin was here also in the same school, attending the same branch in business administration, and I knew that it was both easy and you could earn the exam credits to enter somewhere after. Basically it was the Higher Technological School in business administration that I wanted, but after some discussions with my teachers they said that there is no future in that and I decided to go for accountancy which I like, plus it has future and money. I am also thinking of the Schools for commerce and advertising and the School of Tourism which I also like very much. I am not interested in the branches of electrics, plumbing and so on. I am not for these sorts of things; they are not for me

Another area of interest is the possible influence exerted by the choices of John's peers. John states rather emphatically that his friends have followed the same institutional route of Vocational Lyceum. What merits highlighting here is the polarized perspectives and the antagonistic stances that young people attending Comprehensive and Vocational

Lyceum seem to hold for each other. For John in particular those who attend Comprehensive Lyceum are the “*others*”, the “*contraries*” in relation to whom the Vocational Lyceum students, like him, make sense of themselves as academic subjects. This antithesis founded on the basis of alleged low or high academic merit and ability does not appear to be confined in verbal disputes; rather it gives rise to animosities and confrontational dynamics that further draw the distinction lines between the two groups. In John’s perspective:

My friends are here in Vocational; it is self-evident [while smiling] they are here. With the others [the Comprehensive students] I do not know we do not get on so well. Alright we do have groups of friends from the contraries, but we are in a constant opposition for they are the geeks and we are the bricks [...] Over there go those who study; here we have the books under the desks, the backpack as decorative things and the teachers saying that we are really like tourists.

John’s determination to follow the Vocational Lyceum is strongly associated with his overtly negative estimation of his possibilities to succeed in the Comprehensive Lyceum, indicating a process of self-elimination and self-exclusion that takes place (Bourdieu, 1976; 1977b). In this frame, his parents do not appear to be involved in the decision-making process. As John recites “*they did not say anything for I told them that if I go to Comprehensive Lyceum I will definitely fail to pass*”. The minimal role played by his parents in this matter also links to their overall involvement in his educational trajectory. As John claims, the parental admonition to put a hard effort in his studies, captured by the phrase “*study, study, study*” is all too frequent. Moreover, his parents encourage him to take tutorial lessons so he can have additional help, essential in improving his achievement. However, these counsels and admonitions are buffered by John’s stance who considers the potential investment of his family’s scarce economic capital into his academic career as a bound to fail strategy. Taking into consideration the difficult financial state that his parents are in, John reckons that the channeling of valuable resources into tutorial lessons would be a far too risky and burdensome a choice. It is illuminating at this point to cite John’s argumentation line:

My parents were telling me 'go to tutorial school; they will help you' but I told them that even if I go there is no way I will sit down and study; I told them that I am not going for it will be waste of money. Whatever I can achieve I will do it on my own; if not, it is fine. Alright, we are not the family that has got pots of money. My father does not have a stable job; he gets some money but is not enough. Therefore I did not want to overburden them. They were willing to pay but I did not want that.

As it becomes evident from the quote above John's parents operate within the material limitations that their socio-economic positioning determines. In this frame, their room for intervention in John's educational course is confined to the communication and enforcement of norms and expectations related to social mobility through the vehicle of education. More specifically his parents try through their frequent discussions with John to instill the value of education and of getting Higher Education credentials, so as he can escape working precariously in low-status jobs like his father.

John's imagined future resonates with his parents' expectations for him. In more detail, his envisioning revolves around the acquisition of 'institutionalized cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) and a professional career. This projection of himself to the future stands in accord with his personal conception of success as tightly related with gaining economic capital and status while also having a harmonious family life.

The route for realizing his life-goals though, is not thought of as smooth and unobstructed; rather is perceived to be mediated by the current socio-economic positioning of his family in terms of access to economic capital and social networks. As he argues with a pragmatic pessimism, in these patterns of injustice those who are privileged get ahead while the 'have-nots', yet deserving, remain disadvantaged:

In the future I imagine myself having completed the studies in Higher Education and opened my own business. Probably I will open an accountant or tourist office, which I believe are both easy to do, depending on the School I will manage to enter. In general I consider someone successful, if he has realized his

goals; if things go well for him in terms of money and business and making a family. Things though are not easy; since all of us have goals and not only one; yet some of our goals are realized and others are not. Certainly this has to do with your financial state, how your family is in terms of money. This is influenced by the contacts [meso]. Those who have contacts they will find somehow their way through, whereas at the same time the deserving will suffer from injustice.

Turning now to the case of **Jim**, an aged-seventeen young man, that lives with his parents and his older sister and brother. His father works as an un-skilled labourer in the constructions and his mother is a housewife. While neither of his parents have experience of Higher or Further education, his sister has completed her Higher Technological Education studies in nursing and currently works in a state-funded nursery. His brother graduated from Vocational Lyceum with specialization in mechanics and works as a prison guard.

Jim portrays himself as belonging to Hellenism and Orthodox-Christianity. The ancient Greek legacy, the history and language, figures as the source of collective pride that in his view connects virtually the agents of Hellenism living across countries. This potent yet past-looking affinity though is not static; rather it seems to gradually give place to feelings of shame and disappointment for the current state of political affairs marred by corruption and egotism. As regards Jim's evolving construction of himself, this might be seen as closely linked with the sense of who he wants to become in the occupational field, namely a police officer. As he abstractly claims this sense of becoming is mainly conceptualized with reference to his future professional career, which in his case is mainly underpinned by his dissociation with the manual, dirty and fatiguing jobs like his father's:

I am a Greek and Christian-Orthodox. As Greeks we are closely-knit across all the countries, wherever we live. Hellenism is powerful because everyone feels pride for being Greek and for having this history and language. Certainly things have changed; nowadays we have scandals, corruption; you might feel ashamed

to call yourself Greek since everyone cares for their own interests [pause]. To who someone is, is also important the profession he has; how he makes money. This is why I want to become a police officer and not be among dirt and toil like my father.

Shifting now to Jim's educational route, he identifies himself as being of average achievement, with the mean score of 14/20. Jim does not make reference to any particular incidents that marked his educational biography. Nevertheless, he does make explicit mention of the absence of teacher-student meaningful interactions, beyond the deliverance of the classes. The fundamental pedagogical element of dialogue figures as notoriously absent from Jim's school day-to-day life. Moreover it is noteworthy that Jim does not account the course of career guidance either as a further source of information or as providing guidance and a space for exploration of the young peoples' future aspirations and plans. Indeed these vital aspects of the course are absent in Jim's view: *"we did not discuss, neither about our future, nor about professions in general"*.

This calls for a further exploration of the decision-making process that Jim followed as regards his transition to post-16 schooling. To start elucidating his narrative of choice, Jim rather assertively states that making up his mind regarding post-compulsory education was a decision of his personal making without his parents or other family members engaging with it. More specifically, the strenuous academic work that attendance of Comprehensive Lyceum entails is accounted by Jim as one of the main reasons for not following this path. This is however, related not only to the intellectual demands of the comprehensive curriculum but to the laborious and monotonously stressful style of life that a student of Comprehensive Lyceum typically leads in Jim's view. This involves an exhaustingly tiring day-to-day schedule, accompanied by the private tutorial lessons, which are part and parcel of the preparation process for the National examinations. His argumentation line is captured in the following extract that has an accelerating rhythm with only a few pauses. As he Jim puts it:

On my own I decided to come here. It influenced me the fact that over there they study so much every day and every day they take private tutorial lessons for two years, because the pre-final year is also important, and after all they do not manage to enter Higher Education and they take exams again and again and only few finally pass. I could study, but not every day. I do not like studying all the time; every day you have tutorial lessons after the school and then you go home at night and every day you do the same thing. It really tires me. My brother also influenced me, who came here and followed the mechanics specialization. At the end I think here it is easier.

Jim's disinclination to follow the hectic style of student life that the Comprehensive schooling is typically associated with is justified on the grounds that this does not always lead to the entrance into Higher Education. Therefore this burden of extra-school work and stress does not pay off and compensate for the sacrifices made, because in Jim's perspective the possibilities for success in the national examinations are thin after all.

Another factor that makes him consider the option of Vocational-Technical schooling is his brother's insider-knowledge of the hitherto called Technical Educational Institutions and of the mechanics specialization in particular. As it was evident in the case of John, the educational routes followed by other family members, be they siblings or cousins, constitute a significant information source for gaining insight into the educational landscape. The attendance of a formal informational campaign related with the institutional re-branding of Technical Education and the establishment of the Vocational Lyceum also bring him closer to regard the newly-founded type of Lyceum as an attractive path for him:

At the end of Gymnasium few educators from Vocational Lyceum came and talked to us about the change, namely that the Technical Educational Institution will become Vocational Lyceum and I liked it; I also noticed that it will not have ancient Greek that I did not like at all and I chose to come here, to Vocational

The parental engagement in Jim's decision-making is, as has been already noted, rather limited. Jim emphatically claims that he has not been receiving any help with his homework by his parents. It was only his older sister who offers this kind of academic support to his brother. Furthermore, the limited financial resources at the disposal of the family do not allow the buying-in of extra-school, cultural resources, like tutorial lessons and foreign languages courses. In the context of constrained parental involvement, Jim does not share the particulars of his schooling experiences with them neither does he appear to wish his parents to have a more active presence in the school through more often visits or participation in the 'Parents and Guardians Association'.

I do not discuss so much with my parents about the school. They ask me what we are doing, what I knew and what I did not; but I do not want to tell them what I do and what I do not. I do not allow them to come to school and ask about my progress, as if I did not tell them the truth, as if they did not trust me. I see other parents who come often and ask the teachers and I do not like it.

In Jim's case the parental involvement is more manifest at a normative level, being expressed in terms of social control and communication of norms and expectations. His parents emerge as closely monitoring the patterns of his social behaviour, his whereabouts and his peer networks. As Jim accounts "*they know with who I am, with what kind of people I hang out; otherwise they would not have trusted me. I do not stay out until late; neither do I drink much nor do I get drunk.*" Furthermore, his parents hold high educational and occupational expectations for Jim and try to communicate these through their almost daily discussions on his professional future, which they see as being dependent on success in Higher Education studies. Therefore, it is common place for Jim to listen the parental exhortations "*to study, to get high marks and enter into a Higher Education School*". Whereas his parents do not have specific plans and concrete educational and career expectations, they urge him "*to find a permanent job, to work somewhere permanently and not to be drifting from one to place to the other*".

It is crucial at this point to make the link to Jim's own envisioning of his occupational future. Jim in particular imagines himself as joining the Police Higher Education Academy and becoming an Officer like his uncle. The fact that his "imagined future" (Ball *et al*, 1999) gravitates towards the following of the specific career is tightly bound with Jim's distancing from the status and way of life that his father has, as a construction labourer. Having the personal experience of the hard work and strain that these kinds of manual occupations require means Jim does not want to follow his father's steps. Being aware of the distinct social valour the latter carry and the diminishing ways in which they are perceived by others in social space, he rather dissociates himself from the working-class toilsome way of life. Becoming a policeman, is an aspired occupational identity that promises financial stability, respectability and can invoke professional zeal and pride.

What I like most is to become a policeman. I would not like so much working as mechanical technician, for kind of these jobs have too much dirt. To hammer, to get dirty all the time, I do not like that and because my father is a builder, I know this kind of weariness and the tiredness every day [...] My uncle is a police officer in the headquarters of the prefect and I closely watched him, what sort of work he does, with what a zeal he is going to work, that he is going home tireless, that he has a mood for going somewhere else after and do something else. On the contrary my father and I, when it happens to go with him during the summer, do not want to do anything after work, only to go home and sleep. The most important is to like your job and enjoy what you are specifically doing in your post. It is a different thing to be in dirt and toil and another thing to have an easier job; the way they look at you then changes.

In concluding his narrative, Jim puts a premium on the value of Higher Education and academic credentials for getting ahead, although at the same time he minimizes their importance. His ambivalent stance is fuelled by the awareness of the nepotism and lack of meritocracy that in his view permeate the opportunity structure in Greece. These patterns of structural injustice are further compounded not only by classed positionalities

that condition the access to rich in social capital networks but also by ethnicity. This results as Jim accounts, in unequal opportunities for materializing the occupational expectations and the imagined future that each one has:

If you do not have a degree, you cannot go anywhere, you cannot work. If you have a degree and you also have political contacts, then it is easier to find a job. If you have connections [meso] you will find a job by all means, without difficulties or anything. It is unjust for those with degrees to have others take their positions; only the best must take them. This is unjust, for everybody must have the same opportunities in doing things. Even in cases that someone who comes from Albania, from Bulgaria, anywhere, wants to be a policeman, he cannot; he does not have the right. This is also unjust. I do not know why these things are happening.

Nathan is a seventeen-year old young man and the older child of a family of five. His father is an owner of a small scale business while his mother is a housewife who also partly works for the family-run enterprise. His parents have only completed compulsory schooling without having any experience of Further or Higher Education. His younger siblings attend primary education.

Nathan's self-narrative revolves around the dimensions of his personal and collective identity. He speaks of his personal traits, his gendered, ethno-cultural and religious identifications, at the same time as he associates the practical significance of these dimensions to the shaping of his everydayness. In more detail, Nathan conceptualizes his sense of being a man as having associations with practical aspects of his life and as constituting a locus of difference in relation with women who represent the generalized 'other'. In Nathan's view the occupation practiced or aspired to, is also perceived to play a central role to who someone is, and in his case to who he wishes to become:

It is my character; that I am frank and straightforward. I like being a man. There are differences with women in the interests we have, the kind of conversations we make concerning football and engineering stuff, and that they are feebler. That I am Greek; the language and history are important; also is the way of life, our everydayness; that we will go out, drink and enjoy; that we will talk about politics. The religion, that I am Christian Orthodox, is important although it does not affect my everyday life. Yet I would never, by any means, change my religion. The profession plays significant role to who you are; it is a different to be lawyer and another thing to be policeman, like I want to be.

With reference to his schooling route, Nathan narrates himself as a pupil of average achievement, 14/20. Whereas he does not account any specific incidents in his educational biography, he however voices his frustration with the impersonal and strict academic environment of secondary schooling and the lack of interest on behalf of the teachers. The exploration of his educational choice-making sheds further light on the subtleties of his experiences.

More specifically when Nathan was at the point of transition to post-16 schooling, he prioritized the proximity of the Comprehensive Lyceum to his home for choosing this type of institutional route. Nevertheless, the first year spent in Comprehensive Lyceum was marked by multiple ‘failures’ in core subjects that led him after these negative experiences to alter his route and follow the Vocational Lyceum out of necessity. His account gives a strong flavour of the self-exclusion processes played out and triggered by school ‘failure’. For Nathan there was no reason for plodding in the Comprehensive Lyceum since Vocational Lyceum offered a more pragmatic solution and a less risky avenue for accessing Higher Education, and in particular his preferred School of Police Academy. In his words:

I went to Comprehensive that is why I am here now. I went there because it was closer to my home but I did not have any relation with studying, I failed almost in all core subjects. In September I did not go to repeat the exams and I came

straight here; there was no reason to fight for that. Basically I can easier graduate here. I want to enter and become policeman and it is easier from here, much easier. And the teachers here help more whereas over there they are stricter and do not care. We are like the ones in Comprehensive Lyceum who attend the Technological stream, it is just that here we also have vocational specializations and this is what differentiates us.

One of the levels where Nathan, like other participants, draws his comparative lines between Comprehensive and Vocational Lyceum is the teachers' perceived strictness. More specifically, Nathan accounts the total absence of communication channels between pupils and teachers while he states repeatedly that he never shares his thoughts about his academic and professional future with his educators. What is of specific interest in his narration is his reference to the course of school career guidance and its minutiae:

Basically we did not have any discussions with the teachers. The time during the course of school occupational guidance it was somewhat like the fun hour. Even the teachers were very relaxed and loose about it [...] In general I have not had any discussions with teachers up until now that I am close to finish.

In addition to the lack of substantive communication with his teachers, Nathan speaks of the absence of sustained conversation over his educational route with his parents. However, Nathan's parents are reported as giving abstract admonitions and counsels for putting more effort and investing more time for studying. Nathan is determined not to see himself as person who studies and so refuses to succumb to parental advice and entreaties. Parental occupational expectations are perceived by Nathan as quite open and vague. In particular, his parents are seen as being against the grain of the widely-circulated and deeply-embedded norm, according to which families pressingly steer their offspring towards high-status, professional careers. Nathan recites:

In the past my parents were telling 'you should study; study, study; why you did not study again? We are saying to sit down and study for your own good.' All

parents say the same things about the education of their children and rightfully do so. But, if you do not like something should you follow it by force? I now leave them say their own things. I believe they have slowly started to accept that I do not study. They do not say 'we would like to see you doctor, lawyer and sorts of these, whatever you want, whatever you decide provided that you will find a job that covers your basic expenses'. Namely they do not have such anxieties.

As the passage illustrated Nathan's parents do not play a decisive role in shaping his educational decisions and his occupational preferences. It can be plausibly argued that this element in combination with the absence of communicative channels with teachers or peers, sketch out a rather independent, contingent and open to serendipity process of navigating through the educational system. It is in this context that Nathan's decision-making dynamics are shaped and enforced, and his future is imagined. With reference to his future occupational goals, as it has been underlined, Nathan expresses a clear personal preference for joining the Police. He recites that meeting randomly a young policeman, the summer after he abandoned his efforts in staying in Comprehensive was an influencing factor that further reinforced his disposition: "*I liked joining the Police as an idea and I met this summer a Policeman who was very cool and he was talking to me all the time about the profession and I liked the whole thing, it is nice [...]*"

After Nathan's coincidental encounter with a young policeman, the abstract idea of joining the police started to take a more tangible shape. When Nathan elaborates his educational and occupational expectations, he aims at gaining access into the Police Academy, which is filtered through National Examinations. The underlying reasons for setting this goal are associated with the relative power and status that police officers are perceived to enjoy. Nathan also considers the restoration of order, that was unsettled by corruption and ineffective action on the part of police, as part of civic role and responsibility that he aspired to undertake as a police officer aspires to undertake. The young man finally takes into consideration the pragmatic gains that this career option promises, namely that of immediate and stable professional settlement, element that

features also prominently in the wider Greek public discourse. The following exchange lays out the above parameters:

I want to go well in National Examinations and enter the Police Academy. If not, I will try for the Coastal Police otherwise for some other Higher Technological Education Institution. I want to join the Police because they are the bosses; they can do whatever they want; especially in nowadays there is nothing above them power wise. The restoration of order is not happening in our days because there is so much of corruption. They do not do such a great job; that's for I want to join the Police. It is an easy job; it is not tiring and it has more certain and immediate professional settlement. If you enter the School you will definitely become a policeman whereas this is not the case for other professions, like teachers who cannot find a job and they usually work in various posts.

Nathan's envisioning of the future revolves closely around his aspired occupational identity of becoming a policeman. This also linked with his conception of success, which he articulates as being solely an individual matter that entails the realization of subjective wishes and goals “*not necessarily power and money but achieving what everyone wishes; for someone it can be family, for another travelling; for me it is becoming a policeman.*”

Concluding his narrative, Nathan refers to his perception of the available possibilities for goal realization. He criticizes the dominant situation marring Greek society in which opportunities for positive envisagement of the future on behalf of young people like him were blocked by nepotism and corruption. In a context where the pursuit of personal interests figures as the dominant norm, Nathan's horizons seemed to have been curtailed by resignation and disempowerment evident in the extract below:

There is so much corruption surrounding us. I do not know what to say. Everyone pursues their own interests. I do not believe that we all have the same opportunities, for if you do not have connections [meso] you cannot do anything; this is the truth; you must have contacts in order to achieve your goal. Very

rarely can someone achieve that only with the degree; you must have connections. I do not like this, but it cannot be changed; I am wondering what should be changed first?

At this point I will turn to the case of **Stephanie**, a young woman aged seventeen who attends the Vocational Lyceum. From the outset it can be said that her narrative shares similar concerns with those of her male peers but also sheds additional light on the significant parameters that gender raises. Stephanie is the third child of a six-member family. Her father, a former owner of a restaurant, currently works as a waiter while her mother is housewife. Her parents have spent the minimum years in education since neither of them completed compulsory schooling. On the other hand, her oldest brother and sister have followed the path of post-compulsory Vocational-Technical education and they both work in their specializations. Her brother graduated from Public Training Institutions as a qualified mechanics assistant and her sister from a Higher Technological Institution as a nursery nurse.

Stephanie's self-story is recited across the lines of her gendered, familial, religious and ethno-cultural identifications. She attaches great significance to her positioning as a woman and as a member of a specific family that holds certain values and beliefs, perceived to be influenced by Christian religion. Stephanie also speaks of her affinity to the locale and the country she was born and raised. The cultural legacy, perceived as a matrix that language, history and signifying systems interweave, make up the affective bond she feels to share with her co-ethnics. These affinities however do not have an exclusionary dynamic that could possibly deter her from forming friendships relationships with non-Greeks. The opposite seems to be the case for Stephanie:

That I am a woman plays a very important role to who I am. I believe that we have an advantage as women; we can do different things; we can behave in better and more mature ways. Yet, other things are also significant. The family is certainly one of them; family makes us who we are. Religion is surely a

significant part of this. To who I am the Christian religion does not play such an important role, as to the things that my family taught me to believe in, such as trusting in and not harming other people. The fact that I was born here, in this specific place also made me who I am. I was raised here and I love very much Greece; I cannot think of myself living in a different country. It is the culture, the history, the language and to some degree the way of thinking that we share with other Greeks. Yet all Greeks are not the same; that all of us are good is not true by any means. I have foreigner friends who are one thousand times better than Greeks.

In terms of her educational biography, Stephanie identifies herself as an averagely achieving pupil. She speaks of the unease and the lack of comfort she has been experiencing during her high school years and which prevented her from forming positive relationships with her teachers. Stephanie criticizes the teachers' partiality and favouritism manifest towards the pupils coming from families acquainted to them. This impartial treatment on behalf of educators is further compounded by their sarcasm, the disengagement and indifference, as she claims in the following passage:

Most of teachers want to do their class and go away; they do not care for the pupils; they do not believe in them; they treat you with irony. Unless of course your father is a friend of them; this always plays its role. In this case, would you be able to speak freely in the class or to share with them your concerns and plans?

Stephanie's transition to post-compulsory schooling is approached with a degree of certainty that seems to characterize the process of decision-making she was engaged in. More particularly, her sister's educational and occupational route, through the Vocational Lyceum and Higher Technological Education, exerted a significant influence on the way Stephanie conceives her own educational path, attesting to the fundamental role that play the intra-familial dynamics among siblings. This specific form of familial socio-cultural resource, Stephanie conceptualizes and articulates as "*following the*

elders' traces". Through the use of such a metaphor the complex educational transitions are captured as a process of finding one's way in an educational landscape that likens a labyrinth. The passage below also touches upon the issue of the influence that Stephanie's decision in turn exerted over her peers, while it illuminates her rationale for rejecting the alternative of Comprehensive Lyceum and choosing the branch of computing as her in-school specialization:

I was sure about coming here for my sister also came here and managed to enter then into a good Higher Technological Education Institution. As it is known we follow the elders' traces and we are influenced by them. I may have influenced others with my decision as well, because when I said I will come here, along with me others joined too. The Vocational Lyceum is easier, it does not require as much studying and because you deal with things that interest you more than ancient Greek. Computing is something technologically advanced therefore it is better than ancient Greek. To be frank, I hate babies, hairdressing, beauticians. These professions stink up the place. Computing is the profession of the future and I believe it will have more job positions.

It is worth mentioning at this point that although Stephanie recognizes the value of her sister's path, she distances completely herself from the professional career she followed. Stephanie's strong disliking for traditionally gendered in-school branches, such as pre-school care, nursing, hairdressing, that lead to related occupations is expressed not least through the verb "*hate*" and the phrase "*stink up the place*". These bound to women, female-dominated professions are not thought of by Stephanie as suited for her.

On the other hand computing-related professions do not constitute Stephanie's ideal occupation either. Her ambition as she rather enthusiastically clarifies is to become a police officer, like Jim and Nathan: "*basically I would like to enter the Police Academy. My parents would like that for me. I like the uniform, I like everything around the profession, I do not know, I am in love with that*". It is worth highlighting that Stephanie refers to her own occupational expectations as being in accord with those that her

parents hold for her, which makes the exploration of parental expectations all the more pertinent. Before proceeding to analyze this aspect, it is illuminating to follow how Stephanie sketches out the parental involvement in her educational route.

Stephanie accounts the parental engagement in her education as being severely constrained in terms of cultural and financial resources. Her parents' own educational histories, with the limited time spent in formal education and training, apart from resulting in unskilled labour, low-paid and unstable employment, also affected the amount of help, guidance, time and economic capital they can provide for facilitating Stephanie's achievement. As she explains:

Basically I study on my own for there is no extra money for tutorial lessons. I even help my youngest brother if he needs something. My mother has not even completed Gymnasium, therefore, even if she wanted to help me, she cannot. She says 'if only I could help you'. We discuss though with my mother very much; not so with my father for he works many hours and I do not see him so much; yet we discuss so much with my mother. When I go home she asks me all about school, how it went for me and then she asks me all the time if I have done all the homework, if I study, the typical. She tells me 'if you want to enter into Higher Education, study; otherwise, there is always the kitchen'. My parents do not want the woman to wait from her husband but to have her own money, to be independent. This is why my mother insists to enter into Higher Education, to have a degree and find a job, so as not to be dependent on a man. Basically I work every summer since I was fourteen and this is a kind of independence.

What the passage above captures is the intense presence of maternal figure in Stephanie's everyday life. This is being expressed not only via her mother's monitoring of her school progress but also through the sustained conversation time spent in an attempt to instil to Stephanie the value of education and paid employment for her independence in the years ahead. Academic credentials are viewed as crucially mediating the access to a waged job, beyond the walls of "the kitchen" within which

Stephanie's mother currently stands. The dependent, circumscribed life within the "kitchen" is used by her mother as a rhetorical trapping that encapsulates all those that Stephanie should try to escape from, in her striving towards independence. In the context of the financial strain of her family working during summer holidays, as Stephanie claims, constitutes a first step towards the practicing of independence.

Additionally, academic qualifications and in specific Higher Education, are constructed not only as the vehicle for emancipation from male dependence, but also as the only form of capital that, if acquired, can protect against the risks of unskilled employment. The lived examples of members of Stephanie's social networks serve to illustrate the employment opportunities available for those without qualifications in Greek labour market. Stephanie refers to the kind of traditional and new-type working-class jobs available in the fields of constructions, fishery and service sector. These are the low-status jobs that she struggles to avoid, while she draws a distinction line on the grounds of perceived differences in social status between these jobs and the occupation of police officer she aspires to.

Stephanie's account of her parental occupational expectations offers a "pragmatically rational" (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996) argumentation line for hoping and aiming at a position in police force. It needs noting that after the breaking away from the stereotypical feminine occupations, the gender factor bounces back for Stephanie and is being taken into serious consideration for the shaping of her occupational goals. Becoming a police officer is viewed through gendered lenses since it is perceived as a position in the public sector, accompanied by the potential employment benefits of a stable wage and a longer maternity in contrast with what the private sector provides. In this gendered frame these employment advantages allow the smoother coordination of professional and family life that features as the goal endorsed by Stephanie and her parents alike. After all the occupational preferences are adapted to what "*women like us*" are prescribed to do, a theme that has also been discussed in the cases of Greek young women attending the Comprehensive Lyceum. In her words:

My parents believe that it is very important to take a degree. They tell me to graduate with a high grade and to enter into a Higher Education School because we know young people who only completed Gymnasium and they now work in constructions, in bars, as fishermen and the women they take care of babies and work as waitresses and bartenders. Certainly, the profession of police officer has a different prestige than the waiter's. My parents want me to enter the Police Academy- and I want the same- who would not?- in order to find a secure job, occupational settlement and all these, such as fixed wage and maternity leave, which are important for all women like us. But it is difficult; no matter how much I study now, I do not know whether I will succeed, for I know many people who have taken the exams and more than once and they did not manage to enter. In different case I will try to enter into a Public Training Institution for computing and if I will not manage, I will go for a private one.

The salience of family in the making of Stephanie's self-narrative is also evident in her envisioning of the future. Having a degree and the position she aspires to, take up only a fraction of the notional picture of her future. The latter is crucially complimented by family creation and the upholding of tight and amicable bonds with her parents and siblings. These two elements combined, seem to make up and embody what she conceives as success. The materialization of her plans and her notion of success is not however perceived to be a straight forward, unconstrained process. For Stephanie, "a better future" is mediated by having the right academic credentials and social contacts. Her family's position in the social hierarchy, with the attendant possession of scarce economic capital, is perceived to have impeded her access to the "powerful paper" that Comprehensive Lyceum awards. Not being embedded in the social networks that can open up the labour market gates is also seen as an additional hindrance in realizing who she wants to become. The concluding passage is illuminating:

In future I would like to be in good terms with my family, when I will leave home; to have a degree and a job that I like, my own house, friends and in general to be happy. Success is not only money but also having a degree and a family.

Whatever happens, if you are in good terms with your family, you will always have a foothold. Patience and perseverance are needed in order to find your own way through. Having connections [meso] play important role in that. If your parents have contacts it is logical that you will find a job; and I do not have these contacts. If I had the financial capacity I would have stayed in Comprehensive. I would have attended a tutorial school so as to improve my grades and I would have studied harder in order to have a better future. The Comprehensive Lyceum's paper is a more powerful paper than this is.

Finally special attention merits to be paid on the case of **George**. George is seventeen-year-old and lives with his parents and older sister. George is the only of the participants attending the Vocational Lyceum whose parents are both University graduates and self-employed professionals. His mother studied pharmaceuticals and owns a pharmacy and his father studied physical education and is the owner of a water sports training school. George's sister attends the final grade of Comprehensive Lyceum.

George narrates himself across the lines of his gendered, familial and ethnic positionality. His identification as an athlete and a member of an “educated” family are accounted as having a significant bearing upon who he perceives himself to be. His identification as Greek features on the margins of George's narrative fact that he attributes to the dominant state of socio-political affairs that fractures the past-referential pride and evokes shame:

I am a man, and as a man different characteristics from a woman. This the way we are born. Being an athlete is very important to whom I am, for athleticism is a way of life; is my life and I am happy for that. I believe that every person has his own personality, yet family affects the formation of personality. I come from an educated family. The ninety percent of who I am I owe it to my parents. Few centuries ago I would have considered very important that I am Greek; alright, it still is important but it is not above all. I was born Greek and I cannot change

that. Of course you feel pride that there existed people that made Greece being a model of country but with all these things happening politically and socially-wise, it bears a little shame.

With reference to his educational route, George identifies himself as a “*not so good pupil*” with his achievement levels ranging between 15-16/20. He more specifically refers to his difficulty in writing fast, which he claims did necessitate the intense parental involvement in his studies. George also criticizes the style of instruction in subjects such as ancient Greek, religion and history as hindering his active engagement in these courses. In particular he recites the “*mischance of having a really bad teacher*” in ancient Greek during his years in Gymnasium, as “*a bad experience*” that negatively affected his relationship with theoretical subjects, despite the help received by his parents.

When George was at the transition point at the end of compulsory schooling, his engagement with deciding over the type of school sketches a qualitatively different process of compared with the previously mentioned cases of Jim, John, Nathan and Stephanie. George’s long and detailed narrative account foregrounds the element of intensive parental involvement in the frame of which the school choice is rendered into a collective, familial, enterprise. More importantly, the choice of type of Lyceum is embedded in the greater educational project of achieving the Higher Education entry and it is this longer-run goal that indicates the strategic routes of action.

Fleshing out the parental engagement in decision-making, it can be claimed that George’s mother takes up the role of clearing up the admittedly blurred scene as regards the nature of the then newly reformed and re-branded Vocational Lyceum and the educational prospects it offers. More specifically his mother initiates contacts with the educational bureaucracy, the Local Authorities and the Vocational Lyceum staff, eliciting valuable information for the operation and eligibility of its graduates to take the examinations for access into Higher Education. As George clarifies in the following

excerpt, the workings of parental engagement do not entail imposition, but influence and facilitation of understanding:

It was due to my achievement the fact that I came here but not as much. Just a week before the schools started I was thinking along with my mother the possibility of going to Vocational Lyceum. Until then I did not know what exactly a Vocational Lyceum was, because it was by that time that it transformed from Technical Institution into Vocational Lyceum. My mother phoned the Local Authority and contacted the principal and the staff here in Vocational, and told me that even here you have the right to participate in National exams for University, for I want to enter into the School of Physical Education. So my mother says to me that 'in Vocational you will not have the pressure of the difficult years and modules; additionally you will be taught the modules for National Examinations, both there and in private tutorial lessons, and it will be easier to pass National Examinations'. My parents influenced me but they did not impose anything on me; they helped me understanding how things in Vocational Lyceum are, what you can do. They told me that if I want I can go to Comprehensive.

A significant part of George's narrative relates to the subtleties and the ramifications of his decision to follow Vocational Lyceum route. His discursive stance, which it could be argued has a flavour of defensiveness, is related to two inter-linked and challenging issues. Firstly, that Vocational Lyceum constitutes a type of school that, as George claims, is considered inferior by the majority of young people and their families. Secondly, that in this context he finds himself fending for the students and the teaching staff of the Vocational Lyceum in his circle of friends who attend Comprehensive Lyceum, while he is continually justifying his own decision to join such an educational environment.

It is evident that George attempts to deconstruct what he perceives as a “*mistaken opinion*” that is widely held for Vocational Lyceum, namely that the teachers should

have taming skills in order to manage the classroom and the students are the “*bad ones*” of the young people. It is worth highlighting that his defensive and deconstructing stance is not enacted plainly in a theoretical level. On the contrary, as previously indicated, George narrates himself as engaging in interlocutions fraught with expressive violence elements, when he is in the position of defending his choice in the face of all of his friends who criticize his decision and its plausibility and ponder “*how can you go to a school that teachers have to be tamers?*” George on the other hand objects to these characterizations and talks for the sameness of all young people irrespectively of the type of Lyceum they find themselves to attend. He is quite optimistic that the Vocational Lyceum in a certain period of time will achieve the parity of esteem that presently does not enjoy.

George’s narrative though does not come without its contradictions and tensions between his deeply seated beliefs concerning the inferiority of Vocational schooling and his new lived reality as a member of such an institution. While he objects to the unfair, hierarchical positioning of the two schools and their students, he enters the caveat in the extract below that the Technical Educational Institutions which gave their place to Vocational Lyceum were indeed inferior schools. As he clarifies:

Very mistakenly the guys from Gymnasium and Comprehensive Lyceum have such a wrong opinion about Vocational Lyceum. I believe that in five, six years they will not distinguish it as an inferior school. I believe that young people should start coming to Vocational Lyceum as well, to change this opinion that it is - alright certainly Technical Educational Institution was- an inferior school. Let me say that I tell to my friends who attend Comprehensive that our teachers are very good and they reply that ‘we know that they should be tamers’. I reply ‘they are the same young people who attend Vocational’, alright you will find boisterous but there are no bad ones. I thought like the others that Vocational Lyceum was a bad school- and indeed it was not good- but I also think that irrespectively of the school you go, if you have the zest, you will learn

George's account provides additional light on the distinction processes that in his perspective underlie the discursive, inferior positioning that both the Vocational Lyceum as an educational organization and the young people who attend it have. According to George, family is the locus where beliefs of alleged superiority of some as opposed to alleged inferiority of others, are regurgitated and communicated to the young people. Young people who attend Vocational Lyceum come to think of themselves as inferior, by internalizing the widely circulated stereotypical beliefs and forming low perceptions of their academic capabilities. In George's words:

These attitudes and opinions are formed mainly in the familial environment. Indeed, mainly because their parents want to think that some people are in superior rank than others and also because our age also has that element, to wish to degrade your fellow students. And I know young people who think in this way. Conversely I have noticed that students here in the Vocational feel like inferior, especially during the lessons I notice it. When we have a difficult mathematical exercise to solve, the guys say 'we are in Vocational not in Comprehensive. Who are we to solve it?'

For the formation of the learner identities of Vocational students as not of high intellectual ability and thus inferior to those attending the Comprehensive, a great part of responsibility is ascribed by George to teachers' treatment and expectations. In more detail, George voices his poignant criticism against the discouraging attitudes of teachers and the low support they provide towards students who are not high-fliers. Moreover, as George assertively claims, these young people are labelled as not being academically competent enough and therefore as pre-destined to fail in the demanding environment of Comprehensive Lyceum. In the frame of extremely low expectations and explicit discouragement on behalf of educators, following Vocational seems as the suitable place to be. Additionally, these choices of necessity take place in George's perspective in the absence of institutional provision of information and guidance of how the system of post-compulsory education operates. In his words:

In Gymnasium there were young people who were not so good students and they had said that they wanted to follow Comprehensive and the teachers were saying 'You will not be able to manage, to get on in Comprehensive; you should go to Vocational; it is better to go to Vocational since you cannot be efficient here'. Teachers do not have the time to deal with the spirit of education [paideia]. Teachers that we have been speaking with did not know to tell us about Vocational Lyceum and how it is. It is evident that they do not know and they do not care.

For George this lack of institutional support is compensated by his parents who are actively engaged in his educational route. As George underlined the parental help was crucial in supporting his learning in subjects he was facing difficulties. Furthermore, his parents heavily invest in his own and his sister's extra-curricular activities, which involve tutorial lessons, in English and German and water sports for George, and ballet for his sister. As George recounts *"my parents spend much money for us; private lessons, foreign languages, my sister's ballet classes; for my equipment in water ski they spent 1100 euro while other people hardly get by"*.

George also speaks of the tight monitoring of their school progress and the vigilant control over their social activities and peer networks by their parents. In particular, George's closest friends are the children of his parents' friends, namely the offspring of upper-class lawyers and politicians from the left-wing spectrum. This indicates the presence of closely-knit, inter-generational networks that seem to subtly orchestrate social interactions and steer the enforcement of norms. In George's words *"my parents are very strict to very significant matters, such as our education and our associations, that will determine my own and my sister's life"*.

The previous point links well with George's envisioning of his future, which revolves around his vividly and clearly formed educational and professional plans to study physical education in University and continue his father's business in the field of water sports training. His occupational expectation to follow his father's footsteps is being

habitually shaped through the course of time as George acquaints himself with athleticism. The paternal influence operates subtly yet decisively in providing a context conducive to the shaping and reinforcing of certain dispositions. As the following passage indicates his family features at the centre stage of these workings:

I thought about the profession I would like to exercise when I was thirteen and I decided to follow it in my fifteens. I have been learning about it through the job of my father and because I do sports intensively. My mother and my father told me that if I want take up my father's job it is better to study sports in University. My uncle also studied Physical education and we have discussed about the School and the profession and I liked it; I would like to work in that.

George envisages his future with a certitude and assurance that leaves no space for pessimism. His perception of the opportunities available to materialize his goals is not rooted and associated with merit and qualities of smartness or ability. By contrast, he puts the premium on the legacy that families like his are capable of inheriting. This consists of economic capital, translatable into educational resources, the know-how of the educational system, and the emotional support needed for steering young people towards the desired direction. George's realization of his advantaged position is explicitly ascribed to his familial background and the opportunities it bequeaths for envisioning his future with a sense of control and optimism.

The future will be fine for me because I come from an educated family that knows how schools are and how the life beyond school is. I do not believe that there are individuals who are not clever and capable, for the family can lay the foundations for ascending higher in the ladder. Financial support is needed, for you must take the examinations for University and the knowledge and preparation you get in school are not enough; you need tutorial lessons which they will reinforce your knowledge. Psychological support is also needed especially in our age, for you might divert from your goals. I believe I have all

the equipment. Therefore, the future will be alright, for I know what is going to happen after, in the University and in my occupation.

Being in the Vocational Lyceum seems to heighten George's awareness of his advantaged positionality. The knowledge-ability and the certainty of a member of University educated and affluent family like his are juxtaposed to the relationship that his peers, who come from other countries and from families that do not possess economic and cultural capital in the right currency, form with education and their future. Through George's lenses the lack of information, the insecurity and uncertainty, come to saturate the migrant and working-class young people's dispositions to schooling and the life beyond. George further elaborates his concern especially with reference to his migrant peers for whom he regards the navigation through the Greek educational system to be an even more difficult and puzzling process. The latter in George's view get further disadvantaged by the school's notorious failing to fulfil its role and responsibility towards these young people who need it the most.

There are young people from different countries or Greeks whose families are poor. They come to Vocational because they want to learn an occupation, to become plumbers, electricians and go straight out and find a job. For those who are few years in Greece is even more difficult. They do not know where they are; what exactly is happening with the Vocational Lyceum and the Technical Vocational Schools. These students are as if out of their water; they do not know many things, neither can their parents help them, so they count exclusively on school in order to decide where they are going to go and do after Gymnasium and Lyceum; and when the school does not know and does not do its job then it is difficult. Therefore they feel insecurity and uncertainty; they feel that they might waste few years of their lives because the teachers did not know. It is alright for me, if the teachers do not know, but what about others? Teachers should not help those whose parents are not so educated; who do not know and come from a different country?

Conclusion

This chapter examined the cases of John, Jim, Nathan, Stephanie and George and focused on their narrative accounts of self, educational decision-making and future envisioning. These young people's self-narratives centre on their ethno-cultural and religious identifications as Greek and Christian Orthodox. Their allegiance with Hellenism features saliently as encompassing a historical, linguistic and political legacy, which dates back to ancient Greece and connects the members of Greek diaspora across the countries. Nonetheless, these identifications far from being fixed and static they are accounted as giving way to emotional de-investment and dis-affiliation, due to the current socio-political state of affairs that evokes shame and disillusionment.

Nathan, Stephanie and George speak of their gendered positioning. Stephanie and George also identify themselves as members of given families with Stephanie emphasizing the corpus of values and beliefs of her familial legacy while George narrates in detail the salience that being a member of an "educated family" has, for his sense of he is and of he wants to become. On the other hand, Nathan and Jim make reference to their aspired occupations as being central to whom they want to potentially become.

Seen in this frame of identifications and positionalities, the patterns of young people's decision-making at the age of sixteen as regards their post-compulsory schooling are crucially cross-cut by their familial habitus and capitals, and young people's evolving habitus. Like the young people from different fractions of working and middle classes in Macleod's study, it is evident how different capitals -economic, social and cultural- are enacted to shape their "class affiliation and identity" (2000, p.506).

As it has been noted apart from George the other four participants' parents do not have experience of post-compulsory and Higher Education and their fathers are employed in manual and unskilled jobs while their mothers are housewives. Especially for John, Jim,

Nathan and Stephanie the familial financial strain with the attendant concerns and uncertainties, along with the limited cultural resources at their disposal, sketch out the lines of a rather constrained parental involvement in their educational routes and the decision-making in particular. On the other hand, as the cases of Stephanie, Jim and John indicate older siblings and cousins play a significant role for the navigation through the educational system. They transmit valuable information to the younger members and steer them towards familiar paths in the educational landscape, where the risk of losing one's way is eliminated.

Additionally the cases of these five young people shed light on the ways that their 'learner identities' (Weil, 1986) affect their educational courses through the shaping of decisions at the significant point of transition to post-compulsory schooling and the forming of educational and occupational expectations. As the narratives illuminated 'learner identities' are being constructed historically and inter-subjectively through their interactions with significant others, teachers and peers, in the educational field. Ball and colleagues make a similar point when they argue for a more holistic view of post-16 'choice', while pointing to the fact of inter-connectedness between compulsory and post-compulsory phases of schooling:

Students while making their 'choices' at 16, are decisively shaped, marked and 'positioned' by their experiences of success and failure at school. To a large extent the 'problems' of poor participation, fragile motivation and status differentiation in post-16 education and training are in fact rooted in students' experiences of compulsory schooling (Ball et al 1999, p.221)

Moreover, the perceived distant and strict treatment on behalf of teachers, with its partial and sarcastic overtones and the lack of meaningful conversation and democratic dialogue, further compound young people's sense of *not* belonging in their school communities, and ultimately resulting in academic disengagement. This was also echoed in studies conducted in the American context (Wells and Crain, 1998; Yonezawa et al,

2002) and which point to the differential patterns of expectations, responsiveness on behalf of teachers. As they argue the working-class students suffer from “subtle, insidious and painful” forms of discrimination by their teachers and peers which constantly question their positionalities (Yonezawa *et al*, 2002, p.40). The perceived ascription of an inferior-status by teachers and classmates, along with experiences of school failure, fuel self-elimination processes and resignation (Bourdieu, 1977) which in turn trigger the re-structuring of scholastic dispositions and the (re)-shaping of decisions over post-16 routes.

Through the accounts of John, Jim and Nathan it was made evident that the sense they make of themselves as academic subjects relates to the sense of their place in the academic hierarchy. In particular, they identified themselves as being like those “*who do not study so much*”, identification which is being constructed relationally and with reference to the “*contraries*”, who, as John puts it, represent the norm against which the Vocational students are defined. The past academic experiences of students with low attainment levels in conjunction with the constant categorization processes make them realize and internalize their position in the “hierarchical spaces of their schools” (Yozawa *et al*, 2002, p.52).

Notwithstanding these dimensions, it is noteworthy that John, Jim, Nathan, Stephanie and George aspire and expect to continue to Higher Education, with Stephanie, Nathan and Jim, aiming at entrance into the School of Police, John in the Higher Technological Institution of accountancy or tourism and George in the School of physical education. The profession of police officer represents the occupational ambition that Jim, Nathan and Stephanie hold for reasons mainly related with the discourse of immediate and secure professional and financial route that it offers.

All of them have a clear envisioning of their future as revolving around their studies, their aspired jobs, and in addition for Stephanie and John familial life. It is worth highlighting that John, Jim and Stephanie have a particularly vivid image of their occupational future as the latter being envisaged across the nodal line of who they do *not*

want to become. This sense of becoming is mainly conceptualized with reference to their aspired career, and especially the differentiation between manual and “*easier*” jobs and the distinct ways the latter are perceived by others in social space. This mainly refers to the strong disassociation they discursively perform from the manual jobs of their fathers and the employment opportunities available in the local labour market, in the field of constructions and service sector. The employment prospects, the higher status and to lesser degree the economic reward, form the platform for rejecting the traditional, semi-skilled careers in plumbing, electrics and mechanics that Vocational lyceum offers for being as not suitable for them.

For Stephanie, Jim and John, the envisioning of a “*better future*” amounts to the escape from the working-class position of their families, through the only available medium, that of education. Achieving social mobility emerges as part of a familial project that young people live by, as a parental expectation and driving norm. However, the young people bitterly realize the gulf distancing the expectations from the materialization of up-ward mobility. As they argue with a pragmatic pessimism, not having the financial resources and the right social contacts, reduces their chances of goal-realization. They notably speak of the patterns of unfairness and injustice surrounding them, in which those who are privileged climb up the social ladder while the ‘have-nots’ remain disadvantaged.

To conclude, the narrative of George, accounted from the discursive position of a member of a family with high amounts of economic, cultural and social resources, attests to the omnipotent role that capitals and habitus play in mediating educational and professional prospects. The optimism and certainty with which George envisions his future, is attributed to his family’s advantaged position. On the other side of the social spectrum, in George’s view, are positioned the migrant and working-class young people attending Vocational Lyceum and who are necessitated to count only on the school for drawing knowledge, information, support and guidance. They are like being “*out of their water*” since they do not master the know-how of the educational system and are not equipped with the ‘tool-kit’ for successful navigation. It is exactly the cases of migrant

young people, as they narrate the educational decision-making and their future envisioning, that will be analysed in the following chapter.

Chapter 9

MIGRANT YOUNG PEOPLE CHOOSING VOCATIONAL LYCEUM

This chapter presents the accounts of six young people, five males and one female all of whom attend the Vocational Lyceum. These young people have migrated from Albania along with their families, all with the motor of pursuing a “*better life*” and better prospects in the host country. Thomas, Paul and Nick have seven years of residence in Greece, while Phillip, Alexander and Elise have eleven years respectively. The chapter explores the parameters related to their educational choices and learner identities as they are embedded within the context of their familial migration stories, their adaptation trajectories and their evolving dispositions and positions. The analysis of the narrative accounts sheds precious light into the web of hindrances that the so longed for “*better life in Greece*” turned out to be rooted in.

To start with the case of **Thomas**, his narrative can be claimed to set out the main threads that interweave most of the migrant young peoples’ accounts. Thomas who comes from Albania is aged eighteen and he arrived in Greece when he was eleven-year-old. He originates from a poor area in South Albania gradually deserted by its peasant inhabitants, who as Thomas accounts: “*they did not live well there; they did not have jobs there*”. As a consequence all of his relatives have abandoned Albania in the pursuit of better opportunities in the adjacent countries that most commonly host their co-ethnics, Italy and Greece:

Everybody has left; my uncle is here [in Greece], another uncle of mine is in Italy, my aunt is also in Italy and they have taken my grandfather and grandmother too; I do not have anyone left in Albania; and if some of them are left I do not know them

The dream of a better life is explicitly expressed by Thomas as being the motor for his extended family's migration to Italy and Greece. Previously his parents were peasants who completed post-compulsory education but did not continue to University due to the scarcity of financial resources. For his mother specifically Thomas says "*she was a very good pupil and she could have entered University but they had financial problems and she could not go*". Currently his father works in constructions as an unskilled labourer and his mother in a restaurant. In contrast with the constant struggle to make ends meet associated with peasant life, his family's migration is thought to have given rise to a better life, having facilitated the accumulation of enough economic capital, which his parents already invested into a property in Albania. In his words: "*now my parents have jobs and live better. They bought a house in Albania and they might buy one here too*".

Thomas identifies himself as Albanian in terms of his place of birth and his language. In his seven-year stay in Greece he has only paid one visit to Albania, a fact that he associates with his gradual adaptation in the Greek context and his growing sense of distance from his country. The creation of a network of friends and acquaintances, consisting of Greek and Albanian peers, appears as contributing significantly to his adjustment and to his ethnic positioning. It needs to be underlined that the latter could be not be seen as a given entity, but as a non-linear process during which ethnic boundaries (Barth, 1969) are negotiated, contested and affirmed always in interaction with Thomas's significant others. In his words:

I was born in Albania and I still speak Albanian, though I have almost forgotten Albania completely and I am so adapted here as if I were in my village, this is how comfortably I feel. When I firstly came here I did not like it but I got slowly so used to it that when I go back to Albania I feel that I could not stay there. I have made friends here. I have two Greek friends that I cannot single out because it's the same for me; I go to their homes and they come to mine. The rest of my friends are from Albania; with these lads is somehow different, we communicate better, I feel more comfortably. With the Greeks sometimes I do not feel so comfortable. After all they are Greeks and I am from Albania

Moreover, the young man recites the particulars of his conversion from Muslim to Christian –Orthodox religion, as early as after the first week of his stay in Greece. Their Greek neighbours are accounted to be kindly eager in supporting Thomas's family with their adaptation and helping them to learn the language of the host society. In the context of the evolving friendship and as a token of the amicable bond connecting the two families, Thomas recounts the fact he was proposed to be baptized Christian-orthodox and change his name into a Greek one. The passage below provides interesting details on this adaptive tactic widely adopted by Albanians in Greece:

As soon as we came from Albania and settled in this flat- we stayed on the first floor and this family on third- the woman of the owner liked me very much- and himself of course- but he did not see me as often as his wife. His wife was seeing me every-day and she was asking various things but I did not know what to answer for I did not know Greek, so she started to teach me how to speak and she asked me whether I wanted to be baptized by her, to become Christian Orthodox, to change my name and I said alright, I do not have any problem and my parents did not say anything, they did not object; hence I got baptized

Shifting the emphasis now to Thomas's educational route, this is characterized and marked by multi-level transitions and fractures like most of the migrant young peoples' trajectories. As indicative of these consequent transitions is Thomas' change from the Albanian educational system to the Greek one, from Primary Education to lower Secondary, and from Gymnasium to post-compulsory Lyceum. To start unfolding his route, Thomas completed the fifth grade of Elementary in Albania and joined the Greek Primary education during the sixth and final grade. The sole year spent in Greek Elementary education in combination with the lack of any institutional support for Greek language acquisition, signalled in a decisively negative manner his passage to Greek secondary education. His narrative attests to the various barriers that Thomas had to overcome in order to reach the point where he had to make the choice concerning post-16 education. These hindrances mainly consist of linguistic difficulties which seem to

have impacted heavily on his overall achievement and his attendant experiences of failing to meet the assessment standards:

When I arrived I did not know anything, either the language or anything else and they put me straight in the sixth grade of Elementary here. The first grade of Gymnasium was very difficult. I did not know anything. I was writing the tests and I did not know what to write. I failed in some classes and I took again the exams in September and passed. I passed the second grade, alright. I then failed in the third grade- a teacher of mathematics failed me- and I failed the whole year because I did not manage to pass the September exams. I then found a job and took again the exams in February. After all these I did not want to stay in school. It was so difficult in Gymnasium; even more difficult than it is here in Vocational Lyceum

As his story unfolds Thomas appears to have been toiling through the Greek educational system, experiencing ‘failures’ and immense difficulties. It has been for him such a laborious and frustrating route that, as he explains, he was bereft of any motivation to continue schooling altogether. It is pertinent at this point to mention that Thomas’s friends’ and brother’s school experiences are not at all far from his own educational route. Most of his friends are older and after having finished Gymnasium they dropped out of school. His brother, aged twenty, wanted also to stop going to school, because he failed and had to repeat one class. As Thomas claims his brother did not go to school for two weeks, but after discussing it with their parents, they have encouraged and persuaded him to stay in education. Thomas’s case is to a great extent similar to his brother in that a decisive role is attributed again to his parents for encouraging and urging him to follow Vocational Lyceum. In addition to that, central role played by his Greek employer, close to whom Thomas acquired his working experience in plumbing, in his final decision to stay in education and take the Vocational path. However, even after having made the choice to remain in post-compulsory schooling, Thomas still appears to deeply contest it on the basis of the dubious exchange value that the Vocational Certificate is perceived by him to have in the labour market. All the routes

and possibilities that are seen to be available for his future employment, with or without the Certificate, seem to lead in his view to the same, lowest tier of labour hierarchy, this of manual labour. In the following passage he voices his agonizing dilemmas:

My father and mother decided over coming to this school. I wanted to find a job but they were telling to take the Lyceum Certificate in order to find a better job. Since last year I have been working with a plumber who is Greek and I liked the job. I was saying to myself 'I will spend three years in Lyceum in vain and then again I will have to find a job'. I will take the Certificate but I do not think it will be needed. Here in Greece where can you find a job after taking it? My parents changed my mind and the mister with whom I have been working. He told me 'go and take the paper and I will again take you to work with me in the summer'. The mister with whom I work and my parents convinced me

Moreover, Thomas and his parents consulted his Greek godfather as regarding the choice of the Vocational. Thomas was advised by him “*if it is to continue school, not to go to Comprehensive but to come to Vocational Lyceum for it is easier here, whereas there [in Comprehensive] it is difficult*”. The ‘difficult’ Comprehensive seems to be beyond what is rational to expect and decide over.

As regards Thomas’s past and current expectations regarding his occupational and educational future, he refers to his wish to become football player, which while fading away, gave place to his pragmatic plan to become a Plumber or a Mechanics Technician. In his words:

When I was younger I wanted to become football player but while I grow older I am changing my mind. I want to work somewhere, in an easy job and make money; to work as a plumber or as mechanics technician. I like both, but I have worked and I like more the plumbing. I would like to continue studying after Lyceum. If I pass, I would like to go to Higher Technical Institution, but I do not know

One could not but pay attention to the remarkable shift in Thomas's level of educational aspirations, as manifested in his ambition to enter Higher Technical Education. His parents seems to have played a significant part in this change by the means of bolstering their son's morale and aligning Thomas's plans with their own held expectations for him. Thomas's parents are successfully transmitting their ambitions for Thomas aiming at entrance into Higher Technological Education. This can be seen as embedded within the general normative framework of instilling the value of education as a fulcrum of social mobility, with the ultimate goal of avoiding the kind of manual jobs that his father has:

I wanted to find a job and help my father. My parents though want me to study; they do not want me [emphatically] to work. They tell me to continue in school, to finish here and then to go further, to go to a Higher Technological Institution. My father tells me 'do not become like me that I work in constructions because I did not study as much and was dropping out school; now you have the chance to finish here and gain a degree and find a better job than I have; not to get as much tired as I get in the constructions'. I want to finish school and find a good job, a job that is easy and I like it, not a tiresome one like working in constructions. I want to work and earn more money. If you do not have a degree you can only work in constructions, as a waiter and stuff like that. If someone shows interest and studies, I think he will find a better job

The passage above corroborates the cardinal role that parental engagement, as manifest in the form of norms' enforcement, in steering young people's educational routes. For Thomas working as an unskilled labourer embodies the negative standard according to which he envisions his future. It constitutes a fixed signpost that designates his path, guiding him away from what he should not become. At the other end of the spectrum lies what he aspires for himself and that is rather vaguely captured as a better job than those of unskilled labourer in two of the growing sectors of Greek economy, constructions and services. The educational qualifications are conceived as the indispensable medium for actualizing his plan. In addition to that Thomas states that

securing a better job requires a combination of studying hard along with exhibiting motivation and interest.

In contrast with the previous, rather abstract and optimistic stance that Thomas adopts with reference to social mobility opportunities, in the final part of his narrative, he makes reference to the way he perceives his personal and concrete life-chances. This is where two important factors are implicated, namely his migrant status and the sway of his familial socio- economic background over his occupational future. The former, related to his citizenship status as a non-European Union national limits extensively his occupational horizons. Moreover in order to exemplify how severely poverty can impinge upon one's educational and professional route, he refers to his mother's curtailed ambition to enter University due to her family's poverty. He acknowledges in this way the power of economic capital and whatever its presence or absence can entail. While Thomas grants himself more opportunities compared to his mother previous state of poverty at the same time he characteristically concludes his narrative with the phrase '*I do not know*', challenging the very same claim he made. Since professional trajectories are seen as tightly linked with the respective educational routes, gaining Higher Education qualifications is perceived by Thomas not only a matter of merit and motivation but also of classed and ethnic positionality. In his words:

If you have Lyceum Certificate in Albania you can enter the Police Academy; you can become lots of things. Whereas here you cannot become anything you want; you cannot open your own business; you cannot become a Police Officer. It depends also on whether someone is rich or poor. If you are poor and you study hard- like my mother who studied and wanted to continue to University but her family did not have the money to send her- you might not be able to continue and you may have to leave education. Now compared to my mother, I have more opportunities [pause] I do not know, have I?

Across similar lines follows **Paul**'s narrative, who is an eighteen-year-old migrant from Albania. His account quoted below draws a gloomy picture of the village he comes from, picture described similarly by most of the young people who originate from rural areas. Interesting and unique in Paul's case is his active role in the familial decision-taking process to leave their village in Albania and migrate to Greece. The motif of the hoped for better life in his case is enunciated by Paul himself:

It was mostly me who forced my parents to come here. I could not stand it. My father was regularly coming to Greece but it was for three years that he did not come at all. I was saying to him 'let's go father, let's go'. I was seeing all my friends to have gone, most of them to Germany, Italy, and Greece. When my friends, who have gone to Greece were coming back [to Albania] for a visit they were telling me 'we get on well there' and 'what are you still doing here?' And I said to my father 'let's go to Greece; I cannot stand it anymore; I want a better life'. I was bored there, there were no things to do and we were just a few people left

Paul's family's migration pattern is far from linear. His father having followed the steps of his brother, migrated first to Crete, a large island in Southern Greece, where they stayed for two years. Then they returned back to Albania and after two years they migrated again to Greece, this time to the northern part, to Thessaloniki. In Greece his father works as unskilled labourer in constructions and his mother in a tavern.

Paul speaks of himself as being "*a student from Albania*". He bases his ethnic allegiance on his early childhood experiences and the safety net of belonging that his country of origin, with his friends and relatives, provided. Indicative of the latter is the comparison schema of the *there-friendly-place* with the *here-racist-place*. In his view, mother-tongue and motherland are thought of as the pillars and reference points of his ethnic identification. This is claimed by him as having an almost esoteric and emotive dimension that can stay intact from the practicalities and the ramifications that living in a different country inevitably has. For Paul the acquisition of Greek citizenship and the

adoption of the Greek culture, which is perceived by him to amount to the process of familiarization with the Greek way of life, are instrumental adaptive tactics and practical necessities that adaptation into the host society entails.

However, racism and perceived differences with the Greek people are experienced as inflicting his sense of belonging to Greek society. It is also worth paying attention to the fact that he invokes a claim voiced by several Albanians who feel “*ashamed to be called Greeks*” on the basis of the latter’s racist behaviour and the insurmountable differences that purportedly distance Greeks and from the Albanians. He contends rather emphatically:

I feel as Albanian. Nothing has changed since I came. My friends are there, and here there are only racists. It was there that we used to play, it was there that I grew up; my childhood years; those things cannot be forgotten, this can never change; never. We must not forget our language and our motherland. All of us might change identity cards but never inside us. Whoever decides to be in Greece should adopt Greece’s culture and that is the way of life. You live with the culture of Greece; you do not live with the culture of Albania since you came here. Some Albanians say ‘we are ashamed to be called Greeks’; they do not want because they believe that Greeks are very racists and they think differently than us and they say ‘we are not like that, we are always united; we are different’

Paul interestingly makes reference to incidents that in his words made him “*think about [his] identity*”. Being ascribed by some of his peers as an “*alien*” is a stigma that targets the heart of self-respect and human dignity. The weight of carrying these labels not only typify but also reject and exclude, is felt by Paul as unbearably inhumane. As he explains that:

sometimes girls and boys say ‘you are Albanian’ and this makes me think about my identity and that in Albania I never said to someone ‘you are alien go away’. This has not happened many times, but in these two-three times that has

happened, it did disturb very much. They say things that have nothing to do specifically with Albania or Greece, neither with the fact that you are not from here [pause] because we are all humans after all. But for them you are alien and they treat you as inferior. Then I come to think that I came here whereas in Albania was better

The extract above sheds light on the dimensions of external definitions and ascriptions and the implications that these have on Paul's self-construction and narrative. These experiential dimensions of exclusion may well link with Paul's experiences in the school context. His narrative however does not come without its contradictions and denials. Before embarking upon the exploration of the issues raised, it needs to be noted that Paul's educational trajectory was fragmented, as a consequence of his multiple transitions and changes. In more detail, after having spent five years in Primary education of Albania, he joined the sixth and final grade of Elementary in Greece. His family settled for that year and the first year of Gymnasium in Crete. Then, as it has been already noted, they returned to Albania and after two years they migrated to Thessaloniki, where Paul entered the second grade of Gymnasium.

In Paul's view his ethnicity "*does not play any role in school*". Things though are different when it comes to his classmates' stance and the confrontational dynamics of his relationships with them. Racist bullying and name-calling, fights and irony make up the interactional backdrop against which Paul experiences schooling:

Many times, not only once, they were swearing at us like 'you are from Albania'; they were mocking 'Albanian, Albanian' and so on. I was saying back whatever they were calling me; if they swear, I would too; sometimes I will fight with them. I tell them 'you are racists' and these sorts of things. With this irony that they treat you, you understand that they do not want you in their company, for they do not say 'go away' but you understand that pretty well on your own

Paul's experiences of racism and exclusion have prevented him from making Greek friends within and beyond the school context. Seen in this frame it is not surprising that

the factor of ethnicity seemed to have played a significant role in forming his friendship networks. As he clarifies, the common language, the reference to the same ‘motherland’ and the shared experiential background of migration are connecting bonds that link Paul with his migrant, Albanian peers. The shared migrant positioning along with the common ethnic identifications come to be further fostered by the sense of ontological security, safety and unconditioned acceptance and belonging that Paul feels when mixing with his co-patriots:

Most of my friends are from Albania. We are co-patriots, we speak the same language and it is easier to become friends. I have few friends from Russia and Greece but most of them are from Albania. We say ‘motherland’, even we do not know someone we will try to be friends with him. We have left from Albania and we feel -I do not know- that something bigger unites us. We share the same motherland, we talk, we laugh and that unites us and we do not fight with each other, we do not mock and swear and thus I feel better

As Paul accounts most of his friends from Albania and Russia, in contrast his Greek acquaintances, could not continue beyond the compulsory Gymnasium for a range of reasons, most important of which is the lack of financial means and the necessity to enter the labour market as soon as possible. An additional, compounding factor is referred by Paul to be the pessimistic and discouraging stance of their parents towards their offspring’s continuation of post-16 studies. As Paul claims, the underlying reason is the parents’ view that their children’s engagement with school beyond the compulsory Gymnasium is doomed to produce no positive outcomes and gains. These parents seem to dispute both their children’s capacities to cope in the Greek educational system and the exchange value that post-16 education can have for them. Contrary to the widespread optimistic myth that education can operate as a motor for social mobility, his friends’ parents seem to weigh more the real and multiple barriers one faces as a migrant in order to get by. In the light of tangible survival problems, encouraging their children to stay in school, is probably thought of as too risky a choice, hence a ‘luxury’ they cannot afford:

Most of the best friends I have, not the acquaintances, do not attend school. The lads of course I am talking about are not from Greece but from Albania and Russia, most of them and all of my friends from these countries, and from what I generally know, they do not go to school; they work. Most of them they say to finish the Gymnasium and start working in order to earn money and help their fathers and mothers. They want to go to school, but they cannot. Their parents do not try in order to make them stay in school; they let them free; they do not say anything to them. Friends that I have tell me every time we meet that 'I wanted to go to school but my father did not allow me'. Their fathers tell them that it is better not to go to school because they know it [pause]; they tell them to find a job so they can help them too, because they believe that they cannot study; they say that 'in any case, even if you go to school you will not make it'. It is the financial problems. Also, there are friends of mine with divorced parents who live alone with their mothers; these cannot be in school and have their mothers working for them; so they find a job in order to help them. It is more because of all these that I do not think that anyone would like to work instead of going to school. Everyone wants to go to school and finish but it is the financial problems and other stuff and responsibilities

Paul's educational course however stands in sharp contrast to those of his friends. Paul is one of the migrant young people in this study who in the context of strong, normative parental expectations decided to try first their chances in the Comprehensive Lyceum before attending Vocational Lyceum; the other one is Elise whose narrative will be presented later. However in the light of the immense difficulties Paul encountered during his first year in Comprehensive in subjects that require a high command and appropriation of Greek (and Ancient Greek) language, his teachers advised him to consider the option of Vocational Lyceum instead:

I was last year in the school opposite, the Comprehensive Lyceum, but it was more difficult and I could not understand so much. Ancient Greek was really difficult, also history and Modern Greek, I could not make it in these because I

had not done anything similar in Albania. It was so difficult and I could not make it with studying and so on. The teachers were the ones who mainly told me about this school and advised me to come here because it will be easier and I will learn a vocation. The teachers were right; here it is both easier and most of the courses are within the specialization that we choose and are indeed easier. I chose electronics; I liked this profession, I like fixing things

Having received this recommendation from his teachers and with his parents leaving it up to him to take the final decision regarding his post-16 schooling, Paul turns to the Vocational Lyceum. Subject-difficulties and teachers' advice were not the only factors that contributed and ultimately resulted to his decision to change type of school. More importantly, Paul on the margins of his narrative refers again to the disharmonious relationships he had with his classmates, while pointing to their irony and the confrontational dynamics between them.

As it is illustrated by the excerpt below, the chasm dividing the school experiences in the two types of Lyceum is expressed by Paul through the antithetical schema of 'over-there-here'. For Paul, leaving from the 'over-there' Comprehensive Lyceum is experienced with a comforting relief, related as much to the unbearable situation with his peers in Comprehensive as to the positive climate found in the new environment. It is also worth paying attention to the stereotypical view that Paul holds of Vocational Lyceum as attended by young people of dubious moral qualities. However, after having been part of the institutional reality of Vocational schooling, he asserts that his personal experience negates this stereotype, indeed, it subverts it. He justifies that by juxtaposing the problematic and confrontational relations with his peers in Comprehensive, with the harmonious ones shared with his classmates in Vocational Lyceum, whom now, through his personal lens, perceives as better and nicer people:

Over there the pupils were very ironic; there were many times that I was close to quarrel; they were saying various things about me. Fortunately, I changed school because if the situation kept going, we would have fought very badly for I

reached a point I could not stand any more. Also most of the lads I know well from Gymnasium came to Vocational Lyceum. Thus, I came here. Many things therefore made me come here. Here is better, I do not have any problem. I thought that all the tramps and loafers there would be here, but finally here you find better people, far more nice guys

Against the backdrop of the non supportive parents of his friends are contrasted his own father and mother, who are attributed a decisive role in his choice to stay in post-compulsory Lyceum and in the shaping of his future expectations. In attempting to further flesh out the nature of parental involvement, Paul outlines the financial, linguistic and time constraints that delimit it: his parents cannot offer him any help with the home work, nor pay for tutoring or pay often visits to school due to their demanding work schedules:

It is just whatever I know; my parents cannot help me; how could they help me? They do not know; they do not have the money to pay for tutorial schools; they cannot come to school for they work all day

However, Paul discusses every day with his parents about school matters. His parents expect from him to enter Higher Technological Education and try through their everyday talks with their son to communicate their expectations. On the other side, Paul's long and emotionally charged narrative clearly voices the power of his feelings of indebtedness towards his hard-working parents who agonizingly try to buttress their child's schooling route "*in order not to become like them*". More interestingly, for Paul dropping out of school would risk his parents seeing him as "*a bad person*" who acts out of ingratitude and puts them in a constant agony for his future. It could be argued that this narrative excerpt below illuminates the normative and emotive dimensions of migrant young people's engagement in the educational decision making processes. In his words:

It is more for my mother and my father who work and try and I feel pity for them; I say to myself why should I not go to school? I do not want to them to see me as

a bad person; I want them to see that I have taken a good path in my life, that I can make it so they can be easy in their minds. My parents tell me to finish the Lyceum and take the paper [Graduate Certificate] in order not to become like them. They are telling me, if I can, to go further, to try more and enter Higher Technological Institution, to take a degree and not work like them. They have not told me something in specific. They say 'the matter is to choose on your own what you like and study in order to enter a Higher Technological Institution'

As far as his previous and current professional aspirations are concerned Paul, like his co-ethnic Thomas, dreamed of becoming a football player. In the absence of any specific ambition or dream, Paul envisages himself in the future in terms of family, marriage and a good job. As he accounts:

I wanted to become football player but when I grew up I understood that what I wanted cannot be realized. Now whatever turns out; I do not know; I do not have any dream. I would like in the future to be married, have children, to find a good job and be good in that

To close Paul's narrative, it can be maintained that class-bound constraints mediate his future envisioning as regards the feasibility of finding a so-called "good job". In his account he speaks of the unequal educational opportunities and life chances for those who are disadvantaged in terms of possession of financial and social resources. Although he does not explicitly refer to himself, he insinuates to be one of those who do not have either the economic capital, which is convertible to cultural capital through buying-in service of tutoring, or the social capital in the form of social connections, capable of providing valuable assets in the labour market. The future is "tough" for those, like Paul, who are positioned along with the 'have-nots':

Some attend tutorial schools. Those who have the financial capacity have greater possibilities. They will go to tutorial schools so they will be helped; those who have not cannot go. If someone has a degree and people to help him, contacts

[meso] as they call it [meso], definitely he will find a good job. For those who have not is tough

Similar themes and dimensions of the decision-making process are also traced in the narrative of seventeen-year-old **Phillip** who came to Greece from Albania along with his family at the age of six. He narrates his “*tough life*” in a rural area of South Albania with his peasant parents struggling to meet the needs of daily life. As he accounts, his father had no other choice but to “*fix their papers and come to Greece to find jobs and live better* “. Underlying this decision was the necessity of escaping from poverty and the dream for a better future in the host country. His father and mother work currently in Greece as a guard of a building block and a house-keeper respectively.

Philip speaks of himself to a great extent in terms of his adaptation to the Greek context, which constitutes the place that he was brought up and educated. This is juxtaposed with his lack of knowledge of the Albanian context and his unwillingness to return there:

I have been raised here and I have adapted well. I have gone school here and I got used to it. I have come here at small age and I did not know Albania. Here we have lived more years and it has been better for us. In Albania things were worse; it is not like here; we could not find jobs and they did not pay us well so we could not live like that. Because I am here since I was very small, I have adapted so well that I do not want to go back

After having been in Greece for more than eleven years, and despite his self-identification as Albanian, Phillip claims that he feels more as Greek and if he could, he would change his nationality. It also needs underlining at this point that at the age of ten Phillip got baptized Christian- Orthodox by his father’s employer, a Greek man who according to his words “*helps [my] family in many things*”, one of which is school ‘choice’ as it will be indicated later in his narrative.

An important part of Phillips narrative is seems the derision and scoff with which he is treated by Greeks and the attendant feeling of inferiority he experiences in relation to his

Greek peers. In this frame the acquisition of Greek citizenship is thought of as a protective mechanism against the deeply disturbing labelling he suffers as an Albanian. Moreover acquiring citizenship will signal the end of uncertainty and terminate a series of trouble that the time and money-consuming process of renewing a residence permit entails for his family:

When they call me Albanian I anger so much. I am Albanian but I feel more as a Greek. Yet it disturbs me when they mockingly call me 'hey you Albanian'; I do not know why, but it disturbs me. All of my friends are Greek and it is only me being Albanian and it disturbs me. I feel differently [pause] I do not know [pause] I feel as inferior. For these reasons it is important for me to take Greek citizenship, because the lads will not scorn me and because we will avoid the trouble of renewing our permit cards every second year and paying thousands of Euros. And in jobs, they will not say 'the Albanian came here and takes the jobs from the Greeks'

Shifting the attention now to his academic route, it is significant to mention that despite his assertive claims that being a migrant “*plays no role in school and in general*”, there can be found many points in his narrative account where he alludes to the sway that being an Albanian migrant exerts on his academic trajectory.

As regards the matter of school decision making, it could be maintained that his choice of the Vocational Lyceum is the result of a series of factors. The latter include his problematic relations with some of his classmates, with bullying and name-calling being frequently on the agenda. Moreover, the negative perception of his teachers and the overall climate of the Gymnasium prevent him from considering the Comprehensive Lyceum. As he elaborates on his relationships with his teachers and peers:

My classmates were calling me 'the Albanian' scornfully; they were mocking me and did not want to hang out with me. I did not get on so well with the teachers either during Gymnasium because they were strict, distant and I did not study so

much. They talked to us in a strict manner; when we spoke with someone they expelled us. We could not discuss with them much

It was not surprising that Phillip did not find himself forming supportive relationships with his teachers. In addition, the course of School Career Guidance was to no avail to Phillip either. As he accounts: “*we did not pay such attention; the teacher was not so good; we did not take marks so we did not pay attention*”. Within the context of a strict, impersonal school ethos Phillip seemed to have had no reason for following the Comprehensive Lyceum, which is perceived commonly and by Phillip to represent the institutional continuity of Gymnasium. This self- exclusion occurred despite the fact that all but one of his friends stayed in the Comprehensive Lyceum. As he continues saying about his friends:

All of my friends are Greek and they are friends of mine since I was a child. They all stayed in Comprehensive apart from one. They want to finish and go to Technical Training Schools after in order to study automotive mechanics and other sorts of mechanics

Phillip’s occupational preference for becoming electrician fits well with those of his friends with the only divergence being the educational route through which this is achieved. Crucial to his decision to follow Vocational Lyceum seemed to have been his father and his Greek godfather. For them the Vocational Lyceum figures as the best option befitting someone with low levels of achievement like Phillip. His godfather features at the centre-stage of Phillip’s educational course, operating as a valuable source of firsthand knowledge about the Greek post-16 educational landscape. His godfather is perceived as providing accurate educational knowledge and he not only works as a catalyst for Phillip’s final decision but he also takes on the responsibility of contacting with the school’s bureaucracy. As Phillip explicitly accounts in the extract below:

My parents told me that ‘it is the best for you to go to Vocational’; because I did not get on well in Gymnasium, I did not study as much. My father’s friend and

my godfather, who is Greek and stays in the building block, where my father works as a guard, told him that there is this school for electricians and helped us to get enrolled here. My godfather enrolled me here and he is the one to come every time that my absences have to be accounted for. He has acquaintances among the teachers and asks them about my progress.

As far as the general parental involvement in school is concerned, Philip's parents, as it has been also noted in Thomas' and Paul's cases, could not provide any help with the homework nor could they pay for attending private tutorial schools, which are thought to contribute decisively to the academic progress of pupils in Greece. In the context of constrained engagement with Phillip's education, his parents have no contact with the school or involvement with the 'Parents' Association'. On the contrary, his godfather plays a rather significant part in that as it was illustrated above. Seen in this frame the parental expectations and admonitions revolve around the concrete vocational goal for their son to become an electrician, constituting the latter a pragmatic choice and goal to aim at. In Phillip's words:

My parents do not help with studying because they do not know Greek so well; they know how to write and read but nothing more because they have not been educated here. If we were in Albania it would have been different for they completed the Lyceum there and they know. My parents want me to become electrician. My father says 'this vocation brings lots of money, you will run your own business and you will be fine

To summarize, in Philip's account the Vocational Lyceum becomes a pragmatic choice for a student whose scholastic trajectory is perceived to fall short for both the high academic standards and the occupational options that Comprehensive Lyceum opens. It is crucial however to underline that Vocational Lyceum is not only the 'easy option' for the less academically able students, as Phillip perceives himself to be; it is also the route that many of his co-ethnics follow, thus providing a significant buffer against racist bullying and a sense of exclusion, thereby rendering Vocational Lyceum a safer place

to be. This is why his decision to attend Vocational Lyceum is experienced rather positively compared to the hostile environment of Gymnasium, comprising of bullies, strict and distant teachers and pressurizing, constantly watching and judging classmates:

In Vocational Lyceum there are lots of differences. Because most of young people know that to this school come lots from Albania, so they do not mock them but hang out with them. The teachers talk to us in a better manner; they do not expel us and these sorts of things and they explain the lessons in an easier way. For me here it is better; I pay much more attention; my classmates do not put pressure on me, for they do not care about what the others do

As far as his future orientation is concerned, Phillip expects the completion of his training while he envisages himself in terms of his occupational identity and his goal to become a good and honourable professional. This goal seems to be linked with his personal perception of success revolving around the notions of work ethic, righteousness and money-making. Philip does not perceive any constraints towards realizing his 'imagined future' (Ball *et al*, 1999). He however acknowledges and justifies the import of having social contacts that offer vital help in the labour market. This role of opportunity-broker in his case is played by his Greek godfather:

You have to work hard, to be honourable person and not a fraud, to be good in your job and make money. My godfather will help me to find a job in National Electricity Company. If you are good where you live, they help you. I would like to become a good electrician, to be honourable and start my own business. If this happens I do not want to work in National Electricity Company, as my godfather says. I do want to make my own money

Similar motifs with the rest of male students attending Vocational Lyceum can be traced in the account of **Nick**, a seventeen-year-old from Albania, whose narrative shares first and foremost the migrants' hope for a better life in the host country. Nick accounts:

My parents came here, like everybody, for a better future. There were no jobs in Albania. Everybody is leaving. The elderly only are left there; those who do not work anyway. The rest have gone everywhere; I see that in my extended family; I have relatives everywhere now; they migrated to Australia, Italy, England, Bulgaria

Nick's parents' decision to migrate like their kinspersons can be better conceived in the frame of general socio-economic context of mounting unemployment and economic scarcity that plagued Albania at that time. His parents moved to Greece when Nick was aged ten, his sister nine and his youngest brother five. His father currently works in constructions as a foreman and his mother works in a restaurant whereas in Albania the former was a cameraman in a TV channel and his mother a nursery teacher. For his family, with his parents experiencing downward mobility, the dream of a better life could be more aptly described as a mirage, as Nick's account will sketch out.

Nick speaks of himself in rather elaborate terms, focusing both on aspects of his personal and collective identity. It is noteworthy in the quote below that Nick unlike his co-ethnic peers refers to aspects of himself which emerge as a matrix of his personal beliefs, his Christian religion, his Albanian ethnicity, his music preference, his sports' affiliation and his future occupational status as a plumber. These dimensions are conceived to construct his sense of who he is; they are the loci of his pride and altogether are taken to be more fundamental than his mere ethnicity:

First and foremost I am a man, I am from Albania [pause], I am Olympiakos [a Greek top soccer team] and I like singing hip hop. I am simply proud for myself, for whatever I have achieved. I pay more attention to who [emphasized] you are and after that comes where you are from, the ethnicity. Who you are is made of the things you believe; I cannot single out. Depending on what is your

profession, this might get in your character; it is not the same thing being a professor and being a plumber, like I will become. I also believe in God. I am Christian. I was Christian before I came here. For me it is important; it is important part of my self

Attempting now to unpack the personal meaning that his identifications and allegiances take, Nick asserts emphatically his sense of in between-ness, notably his sense of being “*in the middle of nowhere*” which is experienced and enunciated in rather emotive and complicate terms. With reference to his ethnic identifications, Nick assertively claims his volition to be and feel Albanian, while he speaks of the pride emanating from his ethnic belonging by contrast to other Albanians who are ashamed of and hide their ethnicity. Notwithstanding these positively claimed ethnic positionings, Nick interestingly narrates an ongoing process of alienation experienced both in the Greek context and in his country Albania. His emphasis on the double-edged alien-ness could be construed as stemming from his evolving dispositions, that make up his perceived difference, and in turn differentiate him and render him “*someone else*” compared as much to his co-ethnics residing in Albania as to the Greeks too. As he assertively claims:

I want to be Albanian, I want to feel Albanian. I do not like hiding the fact that I am Albanian; I like saying it. Others do not do it and that hurts me. I take it as if they are ashamed and that hurts me. However, here I am in the middle of nowhere, I am here and I feel alien, I then go to my country and I feel alien too, for it has been so many years since we left. And I am in the middle, I am in nowhere. No matter how many years you are here you always differ from Greeks. You need something more. No matter what you say, you will always need to be someone else in order to stay here, because you will always differ

Through this account Nick attempts to locate, to pin down the so often invoked “*difference*”, which is thought to distance him from the Greeks and unite him with Albanians. Interestingly he clarifies that there are no external or visible differences between Greeks and Albanians; on the contrary the locus of difference seems to be

found in Nick's view in "character". What this point alludes to is not some form of inherited ethnic character but a web of personal dispositions shaped through unique and individual experiences that at the same time are shared and collective. The common axis of this rich experiential material is conceived to be the journey of migration. The following exchange is thought sheds further light on the intricate processes that are involved in the making of ethnic affiliations and identifications, where the aforementioned emphasis on difference is invoked again:

Every single friend I have does not know where I am from; they do not pass me for Albanian. I cannot discern who is Albanian and who is Greek. Simply he has to tell me. Ok, somehow from his character – me as Albanian- I can say if he is Albanian; that is because his character matches better with mine. Most of my friends are Albanian. I match better with them in character. They have experienced many things; they have gone through many difficulties. I feel that they have come here for the same purpose. I like having Albanian friends simply as co-patriots

What also unites him with his peers from Albania is the notion of motherland, indicated by the word "co-patriot". This links with his conceptualization of his country as 'motherland', signifying not only a physical place nor a geographical entity but a fountain of emotions and allegiances. This surpasses expressive capabilities and makes a strong claim and commitment to language and memory:

Motherland for me means many things [pause] the place I started [pause] I cannot express it. It means simply many emotions. I do not want to forget my motherland neither my mother tongue

Despite the aforementioned, being a migrant from Albania is not claimed by Nick to have played some role in his school experiences nor in his decisions regarding his trajectory. Despite his denial, his unfolding narrative indicates that his migrant status probably has a sway over his school biography. To be more specific, apart from the difficulties with the language Nick also refers to the hostility he experiences during his

high school years in Gymnasium. Notably his teachers are accounted as having differential treatment towards non-Greek young people while his Greek classmates are depicted as maintaining symbolically, physically and spatially the ‘distance’ between themselves and their migrant peers. As the extract below illuminates:

In general teachers single out; it is not the same. During Gymnasium something was happening all the time; you may fight with someone, they may swear at you, call you ‘Albanian’ and so on [pause] I did not like the way they were saying it; it was somehow ironic and demeaning [pause] In friendships also, even if we have Greek friends, yet they single out. In different places gather the Greeks in school, in different the Albanians, in different the Georgians. In cafes the same, you find groups of Albanians and Georgians and Greeks sitting elsewhere

Not surprisingly bullying, name-calling and ethnic patterns of social mixing contributed to feelings of discomfort, unease and lack of belonging-ness for Nick, while making his high-school years far from carefree and pleasant. In this experiential context, he was informed by a friend of his who was attending Vocational Lyceum about the existence of this different path after Gymnasium. It is worth underlining that all of his friends have followed Vocational Lyceum yet not all of them have attended the same school. Plausibly enough, he started considering this option as a form of escape from the unsafe environment of Gymnasium and the daunting prospect of Comprehensive schooling. Apart from the important role of his peers as information-givers another decisive factor in shaping his preference for a technical vocation was Nick’s previous working experience as a plumber. After discussing this option with his parents, they in turn did not object but left him space to choose on his own, on the basis of his personal preferences and inclinations. As Nick recites:

A friend of mine who attended this [Vocational] school told me that there is this school where things are better-I did not know even that there is one- he was the one who told me I worked for two summers helping a plumber and I liked it. I wanted to shift to Vocational Lyceum because I liked this profession and I

wanted to gain this kind of Lyceum graduate certificate. I said to my father that I want to go for Plumbing in Vocational Lyceum and he said to me that it is good [pause] - just that- and that if you want it, you can do it; he did not have any objection. He told me to follow what I have inside me, that whatever I choose, I have to want it and not to choose something because someone says so

His decision about the specific Lyceum was based on the information he got from the teacher of career guidance on the basis of the specialization modules availability. Although Nick describes a seemingly exploratory process of guidance, what seems to be the case is the merely affirmative role played both by the teacher and his parents. As he narrates:

I told the teacher in School Career Guidance course about becoming a plumber and he searched and told me to which Vocational Lyceum I should go. He helped all the students. Initially he asked me questions in order to be sure that this is what I want to do; he told me about other professions as well and at the end we arrived at that

It needs mentioning at this point that his parents appear to be intensely involved in Nick's education. The school matters figure centrally on the familial discussions: "*my parents ask me every day how did it go in school, what we did in the lessons, if we wrote any test*". Moreover, during Primary school they used to help him daily with homework while they were paying for tutorial lessons in English. After entering secondary education, his parents' engagement was constrained by their limited proficiency in Greek; as he accounts "*I was mainly on my own; they helped me as much as they could for they had difficulties with the Greek language*". With reference to his sister, who attends Comprehensive Lyceum and wants to become an Architect, the help that their parents cannot offer concerning the school-work is compensated by the attendance of private tutorial lessons as early as from the third grade of Gymnasium. As Nick argues "*all her friends attend Tutorial school and she wanted to attend as well in order to get help with the school-work. My sister tries and studies a lot*". Nick's parents unlike most

of the migrant participants' parents pay regular visits to his school and even more often to his sister's Comprehensive Lyceum, their work schedules permitting. These school visits, however, were fraught with difficulties for them, with language impacting the nature and the degree of contact that Nick's parents had with the school's bureaucracy and staff in Greece. These hindrances though were not only related to language but also to their lack of inside school system knowledge, as the extract below indicates:

My parents consider it a bit difficult to speak with the teachers in Greek. Especially at the beginning it was very hard; eventually they got used to that. It was certainly the problem of language but they did not know how the teachers react, they did not know their characters [pause] and in general they did not know how the school system works here

With reference to his past and current professional aspirations Nick shares with Thomas and Paul the childhood's dream of becoming a football player. This however through a 'cooling-down' process way place to the more pragmatic occupational goal "to find a good job" as a plumber. This expectation is approached with a pragmatic pessimism that links with his perception of the blocked opportunities available in Greece and leads to the opening up of the possibility for potential migration to another European country:

When I was younger I wanted to become football player. I was playing soccer; I was also in a team but when I got that it is difficult, there are many young people that wanted to become the same, I thought that something else must be done. Now I want to find a job as a plumber. Depending on how things will turn up for me profession-wise, I might leave Greece and move to another country in Europe, not necessarily to Albania

Nick does not limit himself to finding a job in Greece; instead he argues that because of his limited "horizons for action" (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996) in the specific country the scenario of possible migration is necessarily open. This is mainly attributed to his awareness that the actualization of his goal to find a good job will be blocked by what he perceives as ethnic and class-bound constraints. Notably ethnicity as well as the lack of

social capital in the form of social network of contacts, is considered to play an important role in determining employment prospects. Along these lines, Nick deeply disputes the myth of meritocracy and contests the widespread belief that a degree on its own opens the gates of labour market. In the final part of his narrative he concludes:

It matters if you are Greek in order to find a job; and the connections play a role. When I worked as a plumber, I was introduced by someone; it was through a contact after all. If you want to find a good job, it plays a role to have someone from your own circle. The degree does not suffice to find a job; it is not just to have merit; you must have someone to help you, to introduce you

Turning to the narrative of **Alexander**, the last young male attending Vocational Lyceum who is a seventeen-years-old migrant from Albania. Alexander is the second child of a peasant family of six who migrated to Greece, when he was five years old, at the pursuit of “*more money and a better future*”. His family was offered help by other “*Albanian families that have migrated before them, mainly his father’s friends*” in order to manage to finally migrate. As Alexander says: “*it is our turn now to help others wanting to migrate*”, like his family did twelve years ago. He describes the life in a rural area of Albania in the following terms:

Life was not like here; let’s say we had electricity sometimes only the morning or only the nights and water only the mornings. There were no jobs, one factory after the other was closing down and this is why everybody is coming here. I like more the culture here and the way Greeks live compared to how Albanians live. Certainly are not the people to blame for living like that. Albania is a poor country, there are no jobs, people do not have money to live better

Compared to his family’s life in Albania, marked by multiple constrictions, lack of even the basic of comforts and bleak future prospects, he states his preference for Greek culture and way of life. As regards his family’s present situation his father works along

with his son aged twenty-five as a handy-man and his mother is a housekeeper. His youngest siblings attend primary and secondary education.

Shifting the attention to Alexander's personal and social identifications, he identifies himself briefly and concisely as a "*Christian-Orthodox Albanian*". Alexander accounts his conversion to the Christian faith, his baptism and change of name at the age of twelve as important in his life. Although Alexander comes from a Muslim family, once he came to Greece at a fairly young age he started visiting a Greek-Orthodox church. Then at some point as he accounts the priest "*asked me whether I was baptized and whether I would like to be baptized and I replied 'why not'. My father was also positive, so I got baptized and changed my name*".

However what takes precedence over his religious convictions is his ethnic identification as an Albanian. Additionally Alexander places an emphasis on the notion of being co-patriot with other Albanians. He notably feels more connected to his co-ethnic peers on the basis of the common language and shared understanding. This bond though is not articulated as a rule-like statement that counts irrespectively for all Albanians. On the contrary it could be claimed that the gladness and the pride felt in relation to Albanian ethnicity, as opposed to shame and regret, operate in Alexander's perspective as the sole criterion for ethnic-co-identification. As he characteristically argues:

Being Christian is important but being Albanian is the most important thing of all. It does not matter that I am in Greece. Sometime I will go back and die there. With other Albanians, I believe, we are the same, there is no big difference; we are of the same ethnicity and we understand better each other as co-patriots. That means they are glad with being Albanian and they do not regret being born Albanian and not something else

With reference to Alexander's sense of belonging in Greek society, a lurking contradiction can be evidenced. He accounts with hesitation an evolving sense of belonging that coexists and cross-cuts his ethnicity and citizenship status as a foreigner. In an attempt to clarify this statement, Alexander points to the issue of acquiring Greek

citizenship as a factor that will seriously better his quality of life. The semi-legal status that he and his family live under exacerbate his sense of not-belonging, not least because of the uncertainty and insecurity caused by the lingering fear of police controls and the bureaucratic renewal of documents every second year. His sense of burdensome and constrained freedom is aptly described in the passage below:

I have so many years here; I would say that I somehow belong to Greece too. It is though that I am an alien in Greece, as regards my ethnicity I would like to take the Greek citizenship. It helps in staying here more comfortably and not having to renew, as my parents do, every two years the papers; in having the capacity to live freely, because the Police can stop you and in front of everyone – it has never happened to me but I have seen others. You feel shame, to be stopped by the Police as if you were a criminal, whereas you live so many years here. This is the reason I would like the Greek citizenship. Not to have anxiety that Police will catch me; to be free

Shifting now the attention to Alexander's educational route, it can be said that his schooling experiences and his relationships with his teachers are described generally in positive terms. Despite that he underlines that his status of being an "alien" as a mediating factor that seems to pervade his relations especially with his peers. What differentiates Alexander's narrative from the rest of migrant male young people is that his internalized otherness is enunciated many times throughout his narrative with the phrase "as an alien that I am". In his words:

I liked the teachers, I did not have any problem in school as an alien that I am; I like them. My classmates, too, as an alien [ksenos] that I am, I like them and they like me. I only remember once [pause] for I do not like fights and meddling with this kind of people; it was one lad [pause] who swore at me and only happened to me once as an alien that I am. Alright, it was a misunderstanding yet he swore at me about the country I am from. May I say it? He said 'f... your Albania' and generally what every Greek says not personally to me, though I listen to them

swearing about the Albanians who came to Greece and they have taken their jobs and so on so forth and it disturbs me for I am from the same country. It is impossible not to disturb me, certainly it does [pause] what can you do?

Concerning the issue of school choice, Alexander's case diverges from the other cases of Vocational students in that he explicitly voices his preference and wish for staying in Comprehensive *"in spite of it being more difficult than Vocational"*. It needs highlighting here that Alexander has average attainment level, which is around 16/20 and clearly the highest among the rest male students in this study. He assertively adds *"if I went there I would surely make it"*. What was the reason though for him not choosing Comprehensive, if it was not the anticipated high degree of difficulty or the general climate of the school indicated by the previous narratives?

Alexander explicitly states that his ethnicity, the fact that he is an *'alien'* in Greece, contributed in a decisively significant manner to his decision to attend Vocational Lyceum instead of Comprehensive. In addition his decision is also based and tightly connected with his future occupation, as viewed through Alexander's projections to his professional future. In this frame his choice of the specific post-16 educational path is explicitly linked with and attributed to his migrant and foreigner status as this mediates and determines to great extent his *'horizons for action'* in the occupational field. More specifically, when Alexander gets informed by his teachers that his aspirations to join the police force cannot by any means be realized because of his citizenship, he decides to follow the vocational path. In his words:

Basically I came to this school, despite I wanted to stay in Comprehensive, for I am alien (ksenos), I cannot take Greek citizenship and be appointed in the professions I like, as Police or Coastal Officer. Some teachers in Gymnasium told me that you cannot be appointed a permanent position in public sector if you do not have Greek citizenship. I was planning to stay in Comprehensive but then I changed my mind. My ethnicity did not play a role in my grades, but in the fact that I came here it played

Alexander was further influenced by his father's counsel to follow a technician's route, an element that renders the unpacking of the role of parental involvement in his educational route quite illuminating. In particular, Alexander describes his father as the family's patriarch, a man "*of strict principles*" who is vigilantly monitoring and giving on a daily basis admonitions as regards Alexander's conduct and social mixing. As regards his parents' involvement with school matters Alexander almost bitterly speaks of his educational route as being a solitary venture. He was the one to teach his mother how to read and write in Greek. The emphasis given by Alexander to the phrase "*on my own*", used the latter twice in the extract below is noteworthy:

My father is a man of old and strict principles. He tells me not mingle with lads who smoke, drink, take drugs and so on. They tell me so every time I go out 'do not that, do not do this'; I believe that all these things they are telling me are for my own good, but I can control myself; it is not needed. In school whatever I have managed, I have done it on my own [with emphasis]. How could they help me? I [with emphasis] taught my mother how to write and read; it is logical not to be able to help me. Despite that my parents have Lyceum Certificate, they have been taught different things in Albania and different things we are being taught here. Therefore on my own I did it all

However, Alexander unlike Thomas, Paul, Phillip and Nick, attended private tutorial classes in Ancient Greek during Gymnasium "*which is the most difficult subject*", and in English, like his previously mentioned peer Nick. Along with these tutorial classes he also attended extracurricular music classes learning how to play trumpet, while he was also playing basketball in a local team. While all these activities were paid by his parents, Alexander declares himself to have played an active role in taking the initiative to look out for the particulars of the activities mentioned and in turn to convincing his parents to support him economically in order to be able to attend these classes. This heightened cognizance of his personal agency on the matter is also found in the case of Palestinian female participant Nur, as illustrated in chapter 7.

Turning now to the issue of parental expectations, these figure as tightly related to Alexander's decision to attend Vocational Lyceum. As it has been mentioned earlier, when Alexander was informed by his teacher that he cannot pursue a position in the police and coastal police force he found himself frustrated and forced to alter his occupational expectations for a feasible alternative, within the confines of his 'alien' status. In this context his father steered him towards the technical vocation of plumbing, through his attendance at Vocational Lyceum. Yet, the parental expectations were not always towards this direction. The familial migration signalled a process through which their dispositions towards their future were adapted into the new-found context of host society. A host of barriers, namely financial problems, the regular contact with the bureaucratic labyrinth of Greek state for renewing their family's residence permit, their status as "aliens", all entwine to make Alexander's parents resign from aspiring at higher-status careers, as they did in the past. The following exchange illuminates the angles of this down-ward process:

My father told me to come here to learn the plumbers' craft for a better future. When I was young in Albania my father was telling me to become a doctor- I remember him saying that. Then we came here and things somehow changed. The language and other sorts of things [pause]. It is difficult to do whatever you wish as an alien that you are in a country. Now, he tells me to be good in this profession, in order not to become like him, a handy-man, who works here and there and the one day you he has a job and the other day he does not even know. He tells me to open my own business and work hard for maintaining my family

Alexander's levelled expectations led him to change his mind and settle for the pragmatic option, the vocation of plumber. As he rather resentfully admits "*it is difficult to do whatever you wish as an alien that you are in a country*". In Albania, though, Alexander perceives that things could have been far different for him, with a wider horizon of possibilities for high-status careers, like parental ambitions for becoming a doctor, that currently are beyond even conception or envisioning. By contrast, as he says:

In Albania you could study whatever you want and be good in whatever you like. You would not have problems like here with the language, with the papers and so on, so forth. You could get help from your parents in the language, in the home-work

It is interesting at this point to refer to his perception of the opportunity structure in Greece and the perceived role of educational qualifications. For the latter he thinks that education can still make a difference in the process of getting ahead: *“it is different if you have a Certificate certainly, otherwise I would not come here to listen about calorimeters; I would have gone straight to work in constructions with my father”*. Notwithstanding, the positive construction of educational credentials, Alexander rather assertively claims that the opportunities for employment are extremely limited for migrant young people like himself, who, in his perspective, are caught up in the triple knot of being foreigners, being poor and not having those connections that can mediate effectively the process of navigating successfully the labour market. It could be suggested that Alexander speaks of the lack in economic and social capital as a by-product of the migrant and foreigner-status that limits the occupational horizons and constrains the possibilities for social mobility. However as he notes, the class-bound constraints to social mobility are equally experienced by both Greek and non-Greek, poor young people:

Since someone is not of this country, so he does not have Greek citizenship and is an alien, if he wants to work in the public sector, in school, in Military, as a Police Officer or a Coastal Officer, he cannot. For an alien it is difficult if he does not have a ‘contact’ [meso] to find even a job. This is needed for a Greek as well – of course it is needed- a poor person cannot take the position of a rich one, even if he is better. This holds for the Greeks too. The difference is [pause] that for aliens is more difficult [pause] to find the ‘contact’ [meso]; it is more difficult for an alien to come to Greece and take the position from a Greek

Alexander acutely acknowledges that getting ahead in Greece requires not only personal worth and merit valorized the latter by educational credentials, but essentially the possession of social capital in the form of ‘contacts’. Exploring further his future professional expectations and the ways he envisions himself in the future, he finally states that his ultimate goal is not to become like his father, namely working in constructions as an unskilled labourer. By contrast he wishes to start his own business, something that he perceives desirable on the grounds of the autonomy and the higher profit that entrepreneurial activity usually provides. In this context where the myth of meritocracy has lost its hold, the opportunities that working-class, migrant young people like Alexander have are extremely constrained. As he elaborates:

No matter how good one is in what he does, in his specialization, if he does not have ‘contact’, that is people who can help you to enter, to get a permanent position, I believe that he will not enter, he will not have a permanent or good position, so simply. I would like this to change so as everyone who has the merit could do what he wants. But it is the way it is, isn’t? Basically I do not want to take my father’s job. I want to start my own business in which I can do whatever I want, I can work however I [with emphasis] want and make my own money. The fact that I have reached thus far, for I am in a foreign country and I have reached the end of Lyceum and I want to go further, I take it as success

Shifting now to the case of **Elise**, she is the only migrant female participant in this study attending Comprehensive Lyceum. Elise is a young woman aged nineteen who moved to Greece from Albania with her mother and sister, her aunt and uncle, at the age of seven. His parents, as Elise accounts, got divorced and her mother “*was forced to come here because she lost her job and we could not stay there for we could not get by. So we came here out of necessity for a better future*”. Elise’s mother familial circumstances have not allowed her to enter University as she had aimed for; she had completed secondary education and had been working as a bank clerk in Albania. She currently works as a waitress in Greece. Elise and her older sister, aged twenty-two and a student

in University of Economics, both work during weekends and summer vacations in cafes and bars to support the family's income.

In the opening of the interview Elise speaks of herself in terms of her ethnic identification, as an Albanian who is prideful of her origin and at the same time is developing feelings of care and belonging for the country she lives. Elise refers to a multiple, complex and situated belonging, one that is not as divisive or subtractive, as the “half-half” identification in her opinion implies, but experiential and strongly emotive:

I came here seven-year old. I do not know but since I was born in Albania and I lived the first years of my life there, so I come from there and I am not ashamed of course for that, although there are others who are ashamed to say that they are from Albania. I am from there and I do not have any problem. My mother, my father, my grandparents, my roots are there. I do not know how others would hear that but I live here and I feel Greece as my country too; I care though for my motherland Albania as well, so I could betray none of these countries. I care for both countries and I will feel disturbed if I hear something for Albania or Greece. I do not like this ‘half-half’. I think it is a bit stupid. They come from a certain country and they love yet another one because they lived so many things, they found friends. I come from Albania but I love Greece too

Emotionally charged phrases and verbs abound in her interesting account, such as “love”, “care”, “betray none of my motherlands”, “roots”, “ashamed”, indicating the intense emotive axes of her ethnic identifications and situated sense of belonging-ness. She moreover conceives this sense of belonging on the basis of a set of principles and beliefs revolving around the notions of religion, motherland and family that she sees as primal in her Albanian legacy and way of life. Elise interestingly acknowledges that the same values are shared by the Greek system of orientations, as she comes to perceive the latter. In her words these are:

The belief in religion; to say that you come from somewhere and to feel [with emphasis] that you are from your motherland- which is the same as here. And the family, above all is the family for us, which again Greeks have it too. We have many similarities in our beliefs and customs; they match very well. This is why I say I have taken elements from both countries

What differentiates Elise's account from the rest of male participants' ones is the emphasis not on difference but on similarities that are found to characterize Greek and Albanian systems of beliefs and value orientations. These similarities, standing in sharp contrast with the many insurmountable differences, in Elise's perspective, bring closer the harmonious co-existence of Greeks and Albanians.

The above-mentioned dimensions of her developing sense of multiple belonging do not mean that the latter is a sort of fixed outcome of a static and monolithic process. On the contrary, evident is her awareness of the possible objections on the part of Greeks to her claims and feelings about the country they happen to be sharing. To start fleshing out this point I will shift the focus to her schooling biography as this is shaped through experiences, interactions, fateful moments and choices.

As Elise recites her childhood years were spent with the sole company of her sister, after being excluded and mocked by other children. The differential treatment Elise has experienced in her early years is juxtaposed by her current inter-ethnic friendships, in the frame of which she does not feel as embodying some form of difference:

I have eleven years here. In the beginning I only had the company of my sister. In the primary not only they did not want me as a friend but they were mocking me, they were treating me differently compared to other kids. Now I have made friends, they do not treat me as if I were from somewhere else; they do not show that I have something different from them

During her junior high school years she claims that she "was not so bad a student" with her average achievement being around 15/20. With reference to the decision over the

type of Lyceum she speaks of it as a rather non-linear, disrupted and constrained process. Her initial preference to follow Vocational Lyceum was based on her perceived “talents” for being a beautician or hairdresser. However the geographical distance and the occupational expectations of her mother operate as the most crucial factors that determined her final call to attend Comprehensive Lyceum. The Comprehensive Lyceum therefore features as the closest to her home and as opening up occupational possibilities which are of her mother’s approval, like computer science as opposed to beauty-related vocations that were the object of her initial liking. In her words:

Since I was younger, I liked to be hairdresser or beautician but when I was told that these branches are not available in the nearest Vocational Lyceum, I decided to stay in Comprehensive. I wanted very much to go somewhere else; I thought I had these talents and I wanted it so much. However my mother did not want me to go for hairdressing or beautician. Basically she did not like these professions. Thus, I went to the nearest Comprehensive and I was thinking to follow the technological stream for computer science

Elise, after her mother’s summoning, followed the path of Comprehensive Lyceum with the intention to study computer science in University. This scenario though could not be realized due to a host of factors, implicating both the role of teachers and peers, that made her first and sole year in that Comprehensive Lyceum a rather traumatic experience for Elise:

Since I went to Comprehensive Lyceum, I quit. I fell so down psychologically that my achievement dropped from 15 to 9. This was due to the overall climate and the teachers; the relationship I had with the teachers. I failed the first grade of Comprehensive and I had to repeat the year. I do not know. I got very disappointed and I was blaming myself. For a period I did not want to come here [Vocational Lyceum]; I wanted to give up everything

The need for Elise to repeat the class was by that time experienced as the outcome of some alleged personal incapacity, a ‘failure’ well- worth of the attendant self-blame.

This emotional struggle accentuated her feelings of dismay and despair and made her unwilling to continue school. This chain of negative feelings was only disrupted by her mother's and sister's determination and persistence to put Elise back on educational track through the means of their emotional support:

Then my mother and a sister convinced me somehow to come here [Vocational Lyceum]; I wanted also to give it a try but they helped a lot, they even pushed me. My mother helped me; she told me that you will enter somewhere in Technical Higher Education and you will become a Computers' teacher or you will work in an office. She liked this idea. Who is this parent that wants her child to become a waitress, to work as a waitress like my mother does here, to do what she herself does? She would not like that at all. She was always saying 'you can follow whatever you like and I will be by your side; I will help you as much as I can'. She never forced me for anything; she never said 'you will go there, you will become that because I want it'; she never imposed anything on me

Elise's mother appears to be decisively involved in her decision not to drop out of school, through a process that could be described as subtle and negotiating on one hand, indicated by the verbs "help", "convince", to a more direct and explicit steering on the other hand, expressed by the verb "push". Particularly significant is her mother's attempt to reinvigorate Elise's professional goals to become a computer expert by persuading her to follow an alternative academic route through Vocational Lyceum and Higher Technical Education.

What at this point would be illuminating is the exploration of maternal involvement in Elise's educational trajectory. Elise stresses repeatedly the importance that her mother attaches to education and to degree. She characteristically quotes her mother telling her "do not think that you are not from here; sit down, read and take a degree and a second degree if it is needed and a third one and do not mind if you face any problem here". In addition to the high valuing of Higher Education, Elise's mother closely monitors Elise's progress through the supervision of her daughter's study time at home, accompanied by

intense arguments and quarrels, and the school visits. As Elise accounts, “*she was coming often to school after her own initiative; she was asking for me, how I am as a pupil, if I study enough. She was coming for she was anxious about the grades I will get*”. Apart from her mother’s regularly paid visits to the school and the strict control, both indicating the latter’s intense involvement in her education, Elise also refers to the help she has been receiving for her homework in subjects where the lack of high proficiency in Greek language by her mother was not an obstacle. Another point highlighted by Elise is her mother’s adamant insistence upon attending a private tutorial school. As Elise accounts in the following narrative extract:

During Primary and Gymnasium my mother was helping me, not in all subjects but in mathematics, physics and chemistry in which she was also good in school; in the rest subjects she could not because she is not from Greece; she knows Greek very, very well; she reads and writes but she could not tell me about the syntax and grammar. My sister was helping me more, in the subjects that she also did in Comprehensive. I never liked going to tutorial schools- I say, if I want to study why should I go to tutorial schools and not sit down and study on my own? It is only this year I went to tutorial school only because my mother was insisting ‘go, go, go’ and whereas I did not want to go, I finally went

Elise, as it has been noted, construes her worsening academic achievement in Lyceum in terms of her psychologically affected state. She admits that she could not stay intact by the climate and the stance of teachers, which in turn led to her motivation to wither and to ultimately resign. It is pertinent at this point to shed more light on the relationships between teachers-students as they are narrated by the young Albanian:

In Comprehensive the teachers work with the good pupils not with the average and this was mainly what put me off and made me resign. A specific teacher, for example, did not care for all her pupils. She only care for and gave attention to the very good ones, above 17-18. From what I understood the teachers paid more attention to pupils that they knew better and they discriminated on the basis

of where they come from. For instance, some students who were not from Greece they did not get any attention whereas others that they knew their parents they got all of their attention. I was feeling sadness for a period. At the beginning I took it personally- I do not know why. However, when I talked to other students who were Greeks I realized that this was happening to others as well. I got disappointed more from the behaviour of the teachers and their indifference and I resigned

Elise's account does not stay at the surface of the general claims about negative and hostile school climate, like those that most of the young people made thus far. She strikingly speaks of indifference, lack of care and attention on behalf of the teachers. Elise refers to teachers' differential treatment on the basis of achievement and discriminatory treatment based on ethnic origin. Teachers are narrated as exhibiting interest for and engaging with students of excellent achievement levels and those whose parents were known to them. The latter element could be read as indicative of the implications that social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), embodied in the form of social connections, can have for its holders within the remit of the educational context.

Elise also compares the climate she currently encounters in the Vocational Lyceum to the frustrating and extremely disappointing situation experienced in Comprehensive Lyceum. She makes an additional point by comparing the stance and attitudes of her classmates through the rhetorical schema of 'here and there':

Basically the students in Vocational are unpretentious; they have a completely different attitude, no comparison at all. Over there, perhaps because it is the Comprehensive, they are snooty, I can say. Here they are more down to earth. They do not pay attention to who studies and who is a very good pupil. Over there they make friends those who study and are very good. [...] Here also the teachers care more. I sat down and discussed with many teachers about the climate that exists, the teachers and our behaviour, and I felt that they understand us and that they can do something about it. I could, if I had any

problem, to discuss with a teacher and s/he will understand me. Whereas there [in Comprehensive] even if I spoke, not only could not the teachers understand, but they did not even try or care to do so

As it has been illustrated through her narrative, Elise does not refer to the difficulties of language and/or of curriculum when comparing the two types of Lyceum. She refers to Comprehensive students as “*snooty*” as opposed the “*unpretentious*” and “*down to earth*” Vocational students. Elise depicts in-depth the communicative and relational aspects of schooling and the ways that these can severely affect and hinder the progress and engagement of migrant young people. By so doing Elise she does not hesitate to highlight the subtlety and significance of the emotional politics of teachers-students relationships.

With reference to her future envisioning, Elise mainly speaks of it along the lines of Higher Education studies in computer science and a relevant professional career, appearing to have distanced herself from her previous occupational preferences. She bases her professional aspirations on her conception of the future prospects that a career in computing has, as opposed to the ‘*no future*’ she sees in female-dominated occupations hairdresser or beautician. The future occupation for Elise it is not merely a socio-economic category; rather it is centrally connected with who she makes herself to be and who she wants to be perceived by others to be. Abstaining from gendered occupational choices is part of her evolving identity and her potential, as she currently comes to perceive it under the light of maternal steering:

I would like in the future to work in an office, to have my job, my own flat and car. I do not want to do something professional with hairdressing and these kind of staff; I might learn it just for me but not to work in that; I would not like it by any means. I believe that there is no future in these jobs that so many women do – how can I say it- it does not represent who I am; I want to show more than hairdressing; in computing I believe I have more to prove

As regards the actualization of future expectations and hopes, Elise's perspective oscillates between optimism and pragmatism. From an optimistic view, the effect that migrant status and ethnic origin can play is minimized, while emphasis is placed on the importance that personal capabilities and love towards the object of one's work play. From a more pragmatic view based on what she sees that is happening around her, she voices a disbelief in meritocracy owing to the ever-presence and omnipotence of social connections that seem to guarantee employment opportunities. In her understanding the opportunity structure of Greece favours all those who have the 'right currency' of social capital, irrespectively of ethnic origin. These kind of social assets trespass on merit-based criteria and run across the spectrum of ethnicities. As Elise accounts:

All of us can make it; if you believe in what you do and in yourself. It does not matter if you are from Greece, Albania or anywhere in order to achieve your goal; you can do it, and better than anyone else. It does matter if you love what you do and you want it yourself. It plays a role however if you have acquaintances, if you have a 'contact' [meso]. But I do not want to believe that. I have heard and I have seen so many things that I get disappointed and I say 'why?' I believe that if you have the capabilities, you have to take a position. If I am not capable to take a post and I do because I have a 'contact [meso], this would be injustice; I would do injustice to someone else. Whoever has a 'contact' can enter somewhere, even if he is not from here [pause], as long as he has the right contacts. But I want to believe that if you love what you do and find a job, everything will be fine

As it is evident from the passage above, Elise does not perceive her ethnicity to be a potential constraint in her chances of finding a job and realizing her goals. In the obstinate face of reality and the injustices caused by the prevalence of nepotism in Greek society, Elise seems left with no other recourse but her self-sustained beliefs in merit and zeal. The latter lie under and connect with her conceptualization of success and goal realization that gravitates around the notions of justice and hard work and excludes the deployment of unfair strategies and the mobilization of "connections":

Success for me is, when you achieve things that you were dreaming about since you were a child. What matters is what we believe; our own opinion; the success as we see it. Basically we must be in good terms with ourselves concerning the ways through which we achieve our goals. If I get a position and I have used many 'connections' [mesa] this is not goal achievement. Goal achievement is to have something in your mind and work hard in order to achieve it

Conclusion

The narratives of Thomas, Paul, Phillip, Nick, Alexander and Elise have raised challenging issues around the notions of difference and identity, of constraints and choices, while they also provided insights on the ways these are cross-cut by classed, ethnic, gendered positionalities and learner identities in the light of migration.

All the narrated familial migrant trajectories had in common the overarching goal and motor of pursuing a “better life” in Greece. Thomas, Paul, Phillip and Alexander came from rural areas in the South of Albania, where their peasant families were living in conditions of poverty and constant financial struggle. For their families migration has brought about betterment in their economic position. For Elise’s mother and Nick’s parents however losing their jobs in Albania urged them to migrate along with their relatives to Greece, where they experienced downward social mobility, given that they did not have the opportunity to convert their “institutionalized” cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) into a legitimate form with commensurate exchange value in the Greek labour market.

As it has been evident, Thomas, Paul, Phillip, Nick, Alexander and Elise provided eloquent accounts of their ethnic identifications as Albanians, as bolstered by their

language, their childhood memories and roots, and accompanied by emotions of pride and commitment, emanated and connected them with their motherland. With reference to the host society, these young people spoke of their struggles to adapt to the Greek way of life. Thomas, Phillip and Elise speak in particular for their evolving identifications as members of Greek society and their growing allegiances to Greece. Thomas, Phillip and Alexander have also been baptized as Christian-Orthodox and changed their names into Greek ones while also developing quasi-familial bonds with their Greek godfathers. Elise and Nick who have already been Christians also articulate the significance that their religious beliefs hold for their sense of who they are.

However, collective identifications are far from being static essences or linear constructions. The case of Nick is illuminating at this point. Nick despite his positive, ethnic identification as an Albanian who feels prideful and committed to his motherland, articulates a double-edged alien-ness felt as much with reference to Greek people as to his co-patriots in Albania. *"I am in the middle, I am in nowhere"*, Nick claimed while invoking a *"difference"*, distancing him from those residing in his country of origin due to his migration history. Another kind of ascribed *"difference"*, based on his ethnic origin, is thought of as instating a divisive line between him and Greeks, while rendering him an *"alien"*. In general, being other-defined, being *"aliens"*, mediate the processes of becoming for migrant young people, not least as captured by the repeated phrase of Alexander *'as an alien that I am'*.

For Paul, Nick and Alexander (and to a lesser degree for Phillip) shared migrant positioning along with the common ethnic identifications came to form the basis for forging friendship bonds with their co-ethnic peers. More importantly the shared migrant histories, marked by multiple fractures, constraints, struggles but also by a host of hopes, ambitions and dreams, seemed to have provided an experiential platform that enables the mutual understanding that these four young people speak of as sharing with their migrant, Albanian peers. Shared ethnic identifications and allegiances were in turn further bolstered by a sense of ontological security, of unconditioned acceptance and belonging that friendship bonds with co-patriots have afforded them.

In the school context, the migrant young people received insufficient institutional support in order to successfully cope with the difficulties of the Greek language and the demanding, highly formal and impersonal ethos of Greek secondary schooling. Seen in this light it was not surprising that the scholastic trajectories for most of them were frustrating and laborious. Moreover, racist bullying, name-calling, fights, irony, sarcasm synthesize the interactional canvas on which their relationships with their peers were taking place. As Rattansi also attests to, “accounts abound of the distress, trauma and injury involved” in the racist attacks minority students receive in schools, ranging from “verbal abuse” to “vicious physical attacks” (1992, p.21). In addition, the perceived apathy, indifference and lack of care on behalf of their educators came to exacerbate the young people’s limited sense of self-appreciation and belonging-ness in the school community. In all the narratives there were evident processes of self-elimination based on interiorized anticipation of failure which operated to exclude the possibility of school success.

These were institutional, experiential and interactional contours of the backdrop against which the decisions over post-16 schooling were made. In this frame the Vocational Lyceum figured as a pragmatic option for the migrant young people, away of the daunting prospect of academic Comprehensive schooling and closely linked with their vividly imagined, future occupational plans. In other words, for Paul, Phillip, Thomas, Nick, Alexander and less so for Elise, post-16 Vocational education was seen as providing occupation-specific curriculum, e.g. apprenticeship in the vocations of electrician for Paul and Phillip, plumber for Thomas, Nick and Alexander and computer specialist for Elise.

Additionally Vocational Lyceum was experienced as a kind of recourse into a less racist and safer educational setting than Comprehensive Lyceum was perceived to be. Indeed a strong antithesis was found to characterize the two institutional paths of Vocational and Comprehensive Lyceum being expressed not least through the schema ‘over-there-here’. Especially for Paul, Phillip, Elise and Nick attending Vocational Lyceum was experienced with a sense of relief and comfort, since the more or less subtle

exclusionary and racist practices of their peers have prevented them from developing cross-ethnic friendships and a sense of belonging to the school community. Contrastingly the Vocational Lyceum, figuring as the route that most of their co-ethnics take when they do stay in post-16 education, constitutes a significant buffer against racist bullying and a sense of exclusion they used to experience. The quest for respect and for safe-like home-places is seen as vital for maintaining a view of themselves of value and explains the fact that young people make this indeed constrained ‘choice’ to follow the Vocational path. Like the minority students in Yonezawa’s study “they hungered for ‘places of respect’-classrooms where they were not racially isolated and their cultural backgrounds were valued” (Yonezawa *et al*, 2002, p.40).

Paul, Elise and Alexander considered the option of Comprehensive Lyceum, while the former two have tried first their chances there, in light of their parents’ steering and expectations to pursue Higher Education. However for Paul, who has only spent seven years in the Greek educational system, the linguistic difficulties he faced constituted a fundamental obstacle that severely obstructed a potentially successful course through Comprehensive Lyceum. The teacher’s advice to follow the Vocational path with the occupation-specific and less demanding curriculum, in combination with Paul’s parents’ positive stance led him finally to reconsider his educational trajectory and follow the electronics’ specialization in Vocational Lyceum.

In similar vein, the experience of one year’s attendance in Comprehensive Lyceum by Elise was described through an emotionally charged language as being psychologically challenging and traumatic. She unlike Paul did not make any reference to difficulties related with the high standards’ curriculum but with the exclusionary pedagogic order and interactional patterns prevailing in the Comprehensive Lyceum. In particular, Elise provided a detailed account of teachers’ preferential treatment and favouritism for the students with excellent achievement levels and those whose parents were known to them. It merits highlighting that while Elise has initially attributed this inferiorizing behaviour to her ethnic origin, after sharing these experiences with her Greek peers, she later acknowledged that these patterns seemed to surpass the ethnic lines. These patterns

indeed seem to have excluded and marginalized low-achieving young people of migrant and non-migrant background alike. The blatantly unequal treatment on behalf of educators was accompanied by the accordingly pretentious and exclusionary attitudes of Elise's peers towards students like her.

Furthermore, parental presence and engagement was central to every narrative. Despite the multiple constraints within which parental involvement was manifest, the role of parents as a source of information and emotional support was amply evident. The limited financial resources and proficiency in Greek, along with the long and laborious work schedules made these parents' engagement with school matters rather minimal (in terms of help with home-work, hiring tutors, school visits). In spite of their parents' being constrained (with the exception of Elise's mother) in the provision of material and cultural resources in order to facilitate their children's academic achievement, all of them were depicted by the young people as trying hard to persuade them to stay in education for as longer as possible. As exemplified in the cases of Thomas and Elise a decisive role was attributed to their parents for encouraging and urging them to stay in school and follow the Vocational Lyceum's path instead of dropping-out. This resonates with Ball's study which also provides evidence that ethnic minority families tend to be "encouraging, even pressurizing, without necessarily being able to offer tangible support or facilitation" (Ball *et al*, 1999, p.212).

Parental engagement was also manifest in the transmission and communication of their ambitions for aiming their offspring at entrance into Higher Technological Education. This can be seen as embedded within the general normative framework of instilling the value of education as a fulcrum of social mobility, with the ultimate goal of avoiding the kind of unskilled, manual jobs that their parents have in Greece. This pattern is redolent of the findings of other studies conducted in other national context which provide similar accounts of the high value attached in education by ethnic minority students and their parents. In particular, the support of migrant families and communities was documented as vital for the development of the positive rendering of education and (Rassool, 1999; Archer and Francis, 2007; Francis and Archer, 2005; Archer and Hutchings, 2000).

Francis and Archer (2005) focusing on the case of British-Chinese young people claim that they manage to even outperform their British counterparts and achieve social mobility, through the deployment of the strategy of “valuing education” and the mobilization of “an ethnically particular cultural capital” (2005, p.104).

Before closing the analysis of narratives of Thomas, Paul, Phillip, Nick, Alexander and Elise, it can be claimed that their positionalities as working-class, migrants lie at the heart of their future envisioning. Thomas, Paul, Nick and Alexander spoke of the limited horizons for occupational choice they have as “*aliens*”, since they cannot be employed in the public sector, and especially in the police or coastal force, and they cannot open their own businesses. In addition, they acknowledged the omnipotence of social capital in the form of social connections [*meso*] for securing employment in Greece, thus deeply contesting the myth that credentials, merit, hard work and zeal suffice for getting “*a good job*”. Being aware of the lack of meritocracy and the nepotism that prevails in Greek society, they envisaged their future with a mixture of pragmatic pessimism, uncertainty and ambivalence, not that differently from the ways Greek young people imagined their futures.

Chapter 10

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS AND MAKING THE LINKS

At the core of the present thesis lie the narratives of the 23 young people who participated in the research study. These narratives were analyzed as situated products of a certain political, discursive, cultural, and socio-economic context. In more detail, they were seen as located in multiple levels, firstly in the Greek landscape with its historic and cultural particularities and its specific renderings of migration and educational policies; secondly, in the two certain institutional settings, one Comprehensive and one Vocational Lyceum in the city of Thessaloniki in Northern Greece and thirdly, in the accordingly situated web of interactions and experiences that these young people's biographies are imbedded in, including the interactional context of the research process itself.

The study is located within the broader social agenda that relates to the perennial interplay between structure and agency. In this frame of reference, the narratives of identities and choices of young people grounded the complicate ways in which, as Mills (1959) puts it, histories crosscut with biographies. The narratives of the young people illuminated aspects of the matrix that is weaved when policies and discourses meet familial and individual histories in a temporal and spatial- specific milieu and lead to the re-molding of identifications and positionalities.

The young people's accounts raised challenging issues around the notions of identity as this emerges through the play of difference and shared-ness, of identifications and dis-identifications, of assertion and ascription. They highlighted how classed, ethnic and gendered positionalities interact with learner identities and give shape to diverse educational decision-making processes and future envisionings. Borrowing Devine's words, it can be argued that in young people's narratives:

Structure and agency collide as questions of ‘who am I?’ and ‘who do I want to be?’ (Agency) are framed by, and frame the structuring of, their experience in school: ‘How am I defined and understood?’ (Structure) (Devine, 2009, p.523)

Consequently young people’s educational choices were taking the shape of their personal dispositions towards their future, as the latter were being formed under the light of evolving identifications and allegiances, of ascription and racism and of the accumulated capitals available at their disposal. These matters will be summed up in the following part across the lines of the migrant and non-migrant status of the young people.

Migrant Young people: On being ‘alien’ and the struggle of becoming

In more specific terms, the migrant young people provided detailed accounts of the ways they narrate themselves as members of social groups along the lines of their ethnicities, gender, religions and migrant status. That is to say, group membership was found to a great extent to mediate the sense they make of themselves, of their social realities and of their life chances. A leitmotif enunciated in almost all the migration stories was the familial, overarching goal of pursuing “*a better life*” in the host society, a goal which was commonly experienced and achieved, if at all, through manifold difficulties and hindrances. The migration stories were part of a greater migration story of an extended family or of a specific locale, a fact that also attests to the continuing significance of chain migration and social networks.

The 12 migrant young people of Albanian, Georgian, Armenian and Palestinian ethnic origin were forming and re-forming their identifications, emotional allegiances and affinities to their ethnic groups and the Greek society through a constant interplay of ‘self-assertion’ and ‘categorization’ (Jenkins, 1996). An internalized otherness was enunciated many times throughout the migrant young people’s narratives. It could be maintained that all the facets of ‘I’, ‘me’, ‘you’ and ‘they’ constitute positionings that

converse dialectically in the process of making sense of who one is and who one can be. This indicates the centrality that external definition or ascription plays in the processes of becoming.

The attitudes of 'others' both in Greek society and in their home countries were seen as shaping crucially their identities, leading in the cases of Eleanor, Nick and Alexander to a sense of double-edged alien-ness, felt towards the host society and their mother country. In most of the cases of Albanian young people and of Nickolas, their identifications as migrants were accounted to distance them from their co-ethnics who reside in their homelands. It is important to underline at this point that the latter processes were crucially implicated in a dialectical play of 'difference'. This 'difference' has been invoked as part of a 'categorization' process (Jenkins, 1996) whereby the majority group was perceived to define them as 'others' on the basis of their ethnic origin and the purported differences emanating from that membership, whilst their co-ethnics in their home-countries were perceived to define them as 'others' on the basis of their migrant status. These ascribed differences seemed to have triggered off in turn a re-affirmation and re-instating of ethnic allegiances that on one hand was further hindering the migrant young people's sense of belonging in the Greek society and their home countries and on the other hand was confounding their sense of being "*in the middle*", of being "*in nowhere*", as Nick has posited it.

The notion of 'difference' has been considered as a key notion in the construction, transformation, mobilization and politicization of ethnic, national, gendered and classed identities (see Brah, 1996; Hall, 1992;1994;1996; Rattansi,1994). As Hall states difference is a slippery and contested concept; there is a difference which makes a "radical and unbridgeable separation" and there is a difference which is "positional, conditional and conjunctural" (1994, p.257). It is important to argue that migrant young people narrated their identities not as static and pre-given essences but as a web of evolving identifications and affinities that they re-assert themselves in the light of racist treatment (see also Modood *et al*, 2002) and exclusionary practices. In particular, their

narratives have illuminated the intricacies and contradictions, the fluidities and crystallizations that equally partake in the processes of identities' construction.

As it has been underlined the identification with 'alien-ness' was a thread running across most of the young men and women narratives. This is not however to ascribe homogeneity where there was complexity and contradiction or to suggest that all the young people were developing identical identifications. By the way of contrast, the narratives of Thomas, Eleanor, Elise, Phillip and Nickolas, detailed their struggles to adjust in what they perceived as Greek way of life, while they articulated their shifting identifications as members of Greek society. In general, it can be argued that migrant young people's accounts of their ethno-national identities constituted, to borrow McCrone's words, "negotiation codes" used as they attempted "to steer paths through processes of acceptance and affirmation" (2002, p.317).

It is also worth highlighting that Thomas, Phillip, Alexander, Eleanor and Nickolas have been baptized as Christian- Orthodox, whilst the first three have also changed their names into Greek ones. As several quantitative and qualitative studies (Labrianidis *et al.* 2001; Hatziprokopiou, 2003; 2005; Alavaro *et al.*, 2008) have also documented, these are common adaptive practices among, particularly Albanian, migrants in Thessaloniki. From the perspective of the adult Albanians who were interviewed by Hatziprokopiou baptism was accounted as "a strategy of adjustment to the host country's culture in order to 'make things easier' for them or their children" (2003, p. 1051). Through the narratives of young people it also became evident that their baptism was embedded in the social networks that their parents were developing with their Greek employers and neighbours. Despite that, Alexander and Eleanor stressed the role of their personal choice in becoming Christian- Orthodox, when they spoke of the affinity they formed towards the Christian religion through their church visits, so as to be asked to be baptized by the church's priests.

The migration histories of the young people of the study, unfolded through their narratives as encompassing an array of dreams and hopes, marked by attendant fissures and transitions on multiple levels and then by the struggles for acceptance, recognition and belonging in the host society. Other fundamental factors such as the migration policies, the structure of labour market and the attitudes that receiving majority holds towards migrants, figured as re-forming the habitus of migrant young people. To be more specific, in the face of changing conditions of existence (Bourdieu, 1986; 1990a; 2001) and always within the bounds of the specific Greek context of reception, the re-shaping of familial and individual habituses emerges as a corollary of these processes.

In particular, the exclusionary dynamics brought about by an incoherent migration policy have resulted in captivating migrants in a state of illegality and semi-legality (Hatziprokopiou, 2003). The feelings of insecurity and uncertainty engendered by these external conditions were voiced particularly in the narratives of those young people in the study who were over 18 and had to renew the personal (as opposed to familial) residence permits (see also Alvaro *et al* , 2008). Dimitri, Nickolas, Irene and Elise all of them aged 18, accounted in detail the encumbered sense of freedom they were experiencing while having to cope with the bureaucratic maze for their permits re-issuance. Being in a state of uncertainty and constant of fear of being arrested by the Police seemed to have further confounded their sense of being migrants and therefore ‘aliens’. Furthermore, derogatory attitudes, projection of stereotypical and pejorative traits, racist name-calling can also be thought as acts of ‘symbolic violence’ in Bourdieu’s terms (1977a) that may be embodied, ingrained and resisted in the habitus of migrant young people. In this reasoning, the latter might potentially integrate the unequal and oppressive relations of power between ethnic groups while they live out and interpret the symbolic and material reverberations of this frame.

That is to say, the grid of dispositions of young people that make up their habitus are constantly transforming through a process of “dialectical confrontation” (Bourdieu, 2001) with external conditions. The schemata of perception that persons apply to social

world are the product of different structures, leading to the possible dissonance between the previously formed subjective mental structures and the social current structures encountered in the new country. This was particularly evident in the cases of those young people whose parents, not being able to convert their 'institutionalized cultural capital' to corresponding occupational posts, faced downward socio-economic mobility. Nickolas, Irene, Dimitri, Nick, and particularly the first two, accounted in length for their parental loss of status

Under the new social conditionings, individuals are engaged in a process of adaptation and adjustment to a great or lesser extent, which it can barely be said to take a smooth course and lead to the desired outcome of up-ward social mobility. What features prominently in Irene's narrative is her belief that being an 'alien' in Greece has altered hugely her whole life, a fact that is closely connected, as it has been illustrated with the downward mobility experienced by her parents.

However, individuals are not pawns that are passively receiving the overpowering influence of the social, timeless and oppressive cause of structures. In this context, there is always the room for the individual trajectories to be altered, for symbolic violence to be resisted, for reproduction of disadvantage to be contested. An emergent question might deal with whether the opportunities of change are limitless and whether the change does occur in a truly transformative or reproductive direction.

Greek young people: Hellenism, family and the disillusioning present

The narratives of the 11 Greek young people provided eloquent accounts of the sense they make of themselves as gravitating around their collective positionalities, and mainly the ethno-cultural, religious, gendered and familial identifications. They spoke of their affinities to Hellenism, the Christian-Orthodox religion, their locality and their families as salient in who they perceive themselves to be. Hellenism featured as encompassing a claim to a common past, a shared language, civilization, religion and customs, a claim that was not anchored to the confines of Greek state but embracing the

Greek diaspora across the world (see also Triantafyllidou, 1998; Lipovac, 1993). The references to the common historic legacy and the language abound in Greek young people's narratives. The claims to diachronicity along with Greek diaspora were accounted as cardinal aspects of what they make sense of their imagined belonging to Hellenism.

It is vital to underline that the Greek young people's narrative identities were crucially mediated by collective memberships, albeit they were not captured as linear and static essences but as affinities that "fade away" (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000, p.30) out of emotive and cognitive de-investment and dis-affiliation. The latter processes were mainly attributed to their ever-growing sense of bitterness, disillusionment and shame that being a member of the Greek civic community in the present evokes to them. The ignominious current state of affairs described as plagued by decay, corruption, nepotism and egotistical pursuit of interests, impregnated the narratives of young people leaving them only with a past-oriented, rhetorical, yet not less real, version of Greek-ness.

What also merits restating at this point is that apart from John, Jim and Nathan, the rest of the Greek young people in the study identified themselves as members of certain families attesting to the significance and salience that family-membership holds for their developing sense of who they make of themselves to be and become. In more detail, Panos, Stephanie, George, Ariadni and Helen narrated family as mediating their ethno-cultural and religious allegiances and as providing the moral frame of their actions and beliefs. In addition, Alexandra and Stephen spoke of themselves as being the 'continuation' of their families, while Panos and George's narratives paid particular emphasis on the fact that they belong to 'educated families'. These indicate a pattern redolent of what Quicke (1993) and Ball and his associates (1999; 2000) highlighted for the A-level British young people of their studies. Quicke's argument on University-bound young people is particularly apt in describing the centrality of family to Greek young people as well, for whom their "parents still constituted significant others in their lives [...] they were principal agents in maintaining the students' sense of self and identity in the world" (1993, p. 111).

By a way of contrast, John, Jim and Nathan and to some extent Stephanie's self-narratives did not gravitate towards their families' present but to their imagined, emergent selves. These young people provided descriptions of their disadvantaged socio-economic positioning that their families enjoyed, as located in a web where precarious employment, poverty and the struggle for getting by are dominant features of everyday life. The only route of escape that they perceived to have available was the mobility through Higher Education. In this frame they articulated a sense of themselves fundamentally tied to the project of aspired social mobility mediated by the process of becoming educated. They did not want to become like their parents, be among the 'dirt' and the 'toil' of working-class existence and way of life, but rather dissociated themselves from this kind of being and living. Like the working-class women of Skegg's study they "had a clear knowledge about their 'place' but they were always trying to leave it" (1997, p.81).

Becoming educated had a gravitational sense not only for the four young people attending the Vocational Lyceum but also for Alexandra and Stephen attending Comprehensive and whose parents did not have Higher Education degrees. As Alexandra has poignantly noted becoming educated equates with becoming respectable, with gaining a sense of 'self with value' (Skeggs, 1997; 2004). This resonates with the same discourse that working-class women used in Quinn's study (2003) for whom "education remained the rare domain where they could make self-hood claims" (Quinn, 2003, p.169).

At this point it is pertinent to interrogate whether and how structural factors, interacting with particular institutional realities of schools, impinge upon the choice and self-making, the experiences and the ways young people perceive their life chances.

Making educational decisions and envisaging the future: discourses, capitals, dispositions and ‘otherness’

The 23 young people’ narratives illustrated how educational decision-making is embedded in a grid interwoven by identifications and emotions, but also by the manifold resources and dispositions, familial histories, and future envisioning. The departing point for analyzing the decision-making processes that young people engaged in, were the specificities of the Greek schooling system that is organized across an organizational division between academic and vocational pathways at the age of 16. These types of systems (like France’s, Germany’s, Belgium and others), as Furlong and Cartmel poignantly argue, structure “educational provision in ways that lead to a virtual social apartheid” (2007, p.15). With reference to the respective choice of type of academic vs. Vocational Lyceum in France, Bourdieu also posits that this decision marks the scholastic course so irrevocably that it has the power to transform “cultural inheritance into scholastic past” (1977b, p.371).

In the Greek cultural and discursive context where the premium has being traditionally placed on academic knowledge, University studies are elevated to the status of ‘Holy Grail’ for every family, irrespectively of class position (Tsoukalas, 1986; Fragoudaki, 1985; Maloutas, 2007). This pattern as postulated by a number of authors is attributed to the deep seated cultural myth that social mobility is fastened upon and irrevocably linked with high levels of education.

Seen against this backdrop it is not surprising that polarized constructions of Vocational and Comprehensive schooling emerged through the narratives of Greek and migrant young people alike. More specifically, the attendance of Vocational schooling as accompanied by claims to intellectual but also to moral inferiority, constituted one of the main themes. Vocational Lyceum was perceived by those who did not attend it as a second-rate educational institution due to the lower standard occupational-specific curriculum and the perceived institutional ethos of slackness and disorder. It was

constructed as an ideal match for all those who were thought of as lacking the diligence and the motivation to learn.

According to widely circulated discourses that young people and their parents seem to endorse, in Vocational schools the teachers are seen as unable to discipline the more prone to violence, 'insolent', 'lazy' and uninterested academically young people. These purported features render it a perilous place to be, since perceived risks of security and safety entwine with the ever-present risk of future 'failure'. This is related and attributed to the presence and the potential mixing with the 'wrong' people, those that Panos (Greece) and Nickolas (Georgia) describe as 'drifters' and 'vagabonds'; those who are seen as destined to be the 'losers' of the social game. This kind of social mix is perceived by young people and their families to endanger greatly the project of becoming the 'proper' middle-classed, academic subject. This risk in turn triggers the processes of boundary-inscription so as social differentiation can be achieved. As Ball astutely reminds us with reference to school choice "the labelling and judgement of others and the self-descriptions they give rise are a fundamental part of the boundary maintenance and social closure" (2003, p.175).

These discursive constructions reflect more than the lack of parity of esteem that is commonly referred to as the plight of Vocational Education. They more importantly attest to the demonization and inferiorization of the social 'others', who are perceived to deviate from the middle-class norm of the 'ideal pupil' (Archer, 2008, see also Gillborn, 1990). As Reay and Lucey (2004) found in their study of inner-city schools in England, there has been noted a circulation of pathologizing discourses, with strong classed, gendered and racialized connotations, which were demonizing certain educational places and those who happened to be situated in them.

The young people who participated in the study did not speak of themselves and of others in terms of social class, a fact that can be associated also with its absence from the dominant Greek discursive idioms. Yet, this is not to be construed as young people denied

social class differences. Rather, there were ubiquitous references across the narratives to the differences and differentiations purported to distance vocationally as opposed to academically-oriented young people. These “modes of differentiation” are indeed from Savage’s perspective indicative of the cultural modalities that social class takes (2000, p.102). As Bourdieu astutely argues class is “ a result of the struggle of classifications, which is a properly symbolic and (political) struggle to impose a vision of the social world, or, better, a way to construct that world” (1998, p.11). In the Greek landscape, dominant discourses as they are bolstered by the educational divisive structure, operate synergistically to legitimize societal “constructions of ‘merit’ and ‘ability’ and value the experiences of some students over others” (Yonezawa et al, 2002, p.40).

In the case of the present study the ethnic composition of schools did not seem to be a concern for the Greek young people. There was no indication that ethnicity-related factors were associated with the inferiorization of the vocational pathways and of the young people who follow them. Neither did the young people articulate claims indicating “an ethnic identity at work in relation to choice-making” (Ball *et al*, 2002, p.349). For all the migrant young people (with the exception of Nur) Vocational Lyceum constituted the educational pathway that the majority of their co-ethnic peers have followed. It was therefore enveloped with a cloak of familiarity and naturalness, since it embodied what other people like them have chosen for. As Bottero reminds us “our choices are governed both by contiguity and by the social comfort that comes from associating with ‘people like us’” (Bottero, 2004, p.995). Not surprisingly, the Vocational institutions were featuring as the quintessentially educational places of diversity or in other words as less racist contexts that were providing the potential of “backgrounding ethnicity” (Ball *et al*, 2002, p. 348). This was not manifest only in the narrative of Nur, for whom Vocational Lyceum rested beyond her horizons of perception and action given that in her Palestinian frame of educational reference this pathway does not exist. For Nur, the legitimate to Comprehensive Lyceum alternative was the “Foreigners’ Lyceum”, which she has been considering as a place where, as she accounted, her own perceived difference would not be accentuated.

Furthermore, the educational choices these young people made over post-compulsory schooling inevitably reflected their 'learner identities' (Weil, 1986), which evolved historically through their educational course, as a result of the external definitions of their academic worth and their interactions with significant others in the field. For highly achieving young people, like Alexandra, Helen, Ariadni, Panos, Vicky and Nur, there was no choice involved as regards their transition to post-16 schooling. These young people were engaged in a long running process of forming an academic habitus that saw the progression to academic post-compulsory Lyceum as a natural progression, as part of their 'educational destiny' that leads to Higher Education. In Ball's and his associates' terms (2002) these were the "embedded choosers", for whom educational decisions were part of a clearly charted route, bolstered by strategies of activation of economic, cultural and social capital of their parents. To these valuable resources it can be added the academic capital the young people themselves were accumulating throughout their educational routes as part of their developing 'learner identities'.

In the cases of young people with average and below average attainment levels like Nickolas, Stephen, Thanos, Irene, Dimitri and Elise the role of parents was also particularly evident in the bargaining of the decision-making processes. These negotiations were taken the shape of persuasion tactics (see also Reay and Ball, 1998) through the mobilization of discourses which value academic education while demonizing the Vocational schools as disordered and perilous educational spaces. In the cases of Irene, Dimitri, Nickolas and Elise, all of migrant background, it needs to be noted that at least one of their parents either had University degree or lower middle-class status in the country of origin. In the case of Thanos his parents were self-employed University graduates, while Stephen's family did not have the institutionalized cultural capital but was rich in economic capital, as his narrative detailed. The familial habituses were unfolding in the narratives of these young people whilst they were giving rise to practices and representations (Bourdieu, 1990a) that provided a strong normative frame for their actions and choices. In more detail, parents were working hard to transmit to their offspring these norms and dispositions which they will in turn steer them towards

what they perceive as the appropriate for them education, offered by Comprehensive Lyceum. Thanos's and Stephen's educational choices were firmly influenced by the differing volumes of capitals their families could deploy and the overarching aim of 'becoming educated'. For Dimitri, Nickolas and Irene, all of whom come from families that in the light of their migration experienced a significant loss in the economic and cultural resources, their educational decisions to follow the more prestigious form of post-16 schooling reflected their class ingrained dispositions. It is in the face of the vagaries of migration struggles that habitus emerges to exert its durable power yet challenged by the changing external conditions.

This role that classed habitus played in the decision making was also manifest in the case of Alexander from Albania and Stephanie and Jim from Greece, who notwithstanding their average achievement did not follow Comprehensive lyceum. For the latter two, Comprehensive Lyceum was beyond their "horizons of action" (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996), it was outside the familiar and the known zone that people like them were to more likely to be placed. It also merits attention the fact that in Nathan's, John's and Jim's and Stephanie's cases their parents were minimally involved in the choice-taking, thereby leaving room to their offspring to make the decisions over the type of schools. By the way of contrast, for migrant young people, Thomas, Phillip, Nick and Alexander, their parents were active in making a strong case for their sons to attend Vocational Education.

In the context of migrant choice-taking, the Vocational pathway was tightly connected with a vividly imagined occupational future. Becoming qualified plumbers and electricians was an objectively feasible and subjectively appropriate option for them. This was rooted in the multiple constraints that the disadvantaged position of their families, their troubled navigation through the educational system and their status as 'aliens' posed to them. Being a migrant significantly reduced what they perceived to be available to them in the labour market.

In addition, most of the Vocational Lyceum students both of Greek and migrant background provided accounts with a strong flavour of the self-exclusion processes played out and triggered off by school ‘failure’. More specifically, they evinced the degree of disheartenment and intimidation that low or averagely attaining students face in strict impersonal school environments. As the accounts of Thomas, Phillip, Nick, John, Jim and Nathan have shown, the sense they make of themselves as academic subjects links with the sense of their place in the academic hierarchy. In particular they identified themselves as being like those “who do not study that much”, identification which is being constructed relationally and inter-subjectively, with reference, as John has put it, to those “contraries” who attend Comprehensive Lyceum and represent the “ideal learners” in Archer’s terms (2008). Furthermore, in their cases Vocational Lyceum came to represent what was “reasonable to expect” (Bourdieu, 1990a) for people like them.

It needs to be underlined once more that the young people did make references as regards what they perceived as a less demanding curriculum for choosing Vocational Lyceum, and particularly with reference to the absence of language subjects of modern and Ancient Greek. It can also be argued that most of young people’s parents seem to evaluate the factor of geographical distance as being of great import when deciding particularly for their daughters’ school. Nevertheless, these factors were only a minor part of the decision dynamics involves.

More importantly the institutional ethos, encompassing the sometimes hostile relations with teachers and peers, the absence of institutional support and guidance had a considerable impact on young people’s choices over post-16 schooling. The explicitly preferential and impartial treatment of teachers, the neglect, indifference and discouragement towards students of low and average attainment levels played a crucial in the decisions of young people to follow Vocational Lyceum. All these accounts confirm the dominance of what Lingard (2007) terms as “pedagogies of indifference”, manifest in the experiences of Greek and migrant young people alike.

This is not to suggest that migrant young people who attended Comprehensive Lyceum, like Nur, Vicky, Eleanor, Dimitri, Irene and Elise, have not encountered these pedagogies of indifference and partiality. In their accounts the teachers' stances were construed as a product of their favouritism towards certain students on the basis of their ethnic origin and their achievement level. Nur, for instance has spoken of a hierarchy of teacher's likings in which the least favoured position is occupied by the non-Greek students and the most valued one by the high fliers Greek male students. Dimitri also referred to the conspicuously racist treatment that his brother and his Albanian classmates received. No matter if this indeed was or not the case, these young people also perceived that they were marked down and treated unequally compared to their Greek peers in the competitive environment of Comprehensive Lyceum.

The narratives of migrant young people voiced powerfully the symbolic domination that impregnates the interactions in the school context where being Greek emerged as the dominant standard, against which the non-Greek young people seemed to have been judged and inferiorized. The relations among peers were perceived as being hierarchically structured, with male Greeks prevailing through the exercise of symbolic and physical violence over non-Greek young people who aspire to be members of the dominant group. Nur, Elise and Irene accounted in a rather assertively emotional language their experiences of being other-defined and positioned as somehow inferior to their Greek counterparts. For them Comprehensive Lyceum was constructed as school environment that they needed to escape from since it did not provide opportunities to all students like them to feel equally valued and respected. On the other hand the institutional context of the 'aliens- only- school' for Nur and the Vocational Lyceum for Irene and Elise were seen as less racist and threatening places, as educational spaces where they could regain respect and develop a sense of acceptance and belonging. These aspects lie at the core of disadvantaged young people's processes of deciding over their academic and vocational trajectories.

Young people's identifications: Bringing structure back in

It is essential to underline that the narratives presented here constitute only incomplete and unfinished stories that do not claim to be a conduit to some monolithic 'reality' or 'truth'. Through the analysis of the accounts of the 23 young people emphasis has been placed on "the structural realities that set limits on real people in real institutions in everyday life" (Apple, 2000, p.248). It was shown that what constitutes a 'choice' itself varies along the social class, ethnicity and gender lines. A monolithic, uni-focused account of educational choice would not do justice to the heterogeneity that permeates the educational landscape, evidenced at inter-class but also intra-class level, and further diversified by the factors of specific, national and local policies, discourses and individual histories. It was mainly these intersections that were explored with reference to young people's post-16 trajectories, school experiences, ambitions, imagined futures and identities. As it has been demonstrated the young people who participated in this study "emerge as subjects through the nexus of structures, power relations and capital transfers which produce frameworks of representations and values" (Skeggs, 1997, p.160). This constellation establishes what it means to be a young person, male and female, working-class and middle-class, growing up in the rapidly changing Greek society.

The most fundamental difference between the young people of the present study and certain strands of sociological research and theory lies heavily on the thesis of individualization. I share Ball's argument that "the possibility of continuities or the re-working or re-emergence of 'traditional' forms is eschewed by the grammar of such theorizing" (Ball *et al*, 2000, p.143). By a way of contrast, for the young people of this study collective identifications and allegiances continue to matter and shape their self-narratives, future envisagement and perceptions of their life chances. As Calhoun rightly points collective identifications and allegiances were "neither simply a matter of inheritance and essential commonality nor a matter of free-flowing ubiquitous and undetermined construction"; rather they were, "socially produced, shaped by material

factors, culturally organized and yet also open to human action” (2003, p.549). Materiality and culture, discourses and state policies rebound upon young people, shaping powerfully what they become and, in the final analysis, the identities they can achieve (Archer, 2000). Bauman’s point that “all of us are doomed to the life of choices, but not all of us have the means to be choosers” is pertinent here (1998, p.86).

As regards young people’s future envisagement, it has been underlined how their life chances were commonly perceived to be structurally conditioned by the access to economic resources and social networks. The power of social capital in the form of social contacts [‘meso’] capable of bargaining and overcoming the gate-keeping of the labour market loomed large in their narratives. The latter were saturated with a pragmatic pessimism and mistrust due to what they poignantly voiced as being the malaises of Greek society, namely the lack of meritocracy, the omnipotent partisanship, the corruption and the all pervading egotism. What exactly these young people seemed to be disposed of is the capability in Giddens’s terms of “colonizing the future” (1994, p.94). As McNay highlights the ability to hope is fundamentally linked to social positioning, “most especially to the agent’s objective ability to manipulate the potentialities of the present in order to realize some future project” (2008, p.281).

What appears however to enjoy salient position in most of the young people’s envisioning of the future was the importance of family. Being in line with what Ball and his associates have argued family “remains here a key source of belonging” (Ball et al, 2000, p.144) whereby “forming social perspectives and generating resources for identity formation” (ibid, 143). As much through retaining the links with their current families as through creating their own, “putting the family first”, as James and his associates (1994) have phrased it, seems to embody a central pillar in young people’s imagined futures. As the majority of the participants articulated, their sense of personal success and respectability was crucially mediated by family creation. More particularly for the Greek women of the study, family-related priorities emerged not only to filter the setting of occupational expectations and goals but also to frame the identities they can achieve.

This point further challenges “the expressive possibilities thrown up by the processes of detraditionalization” (McNay, 1999, p.95).

Two questions emerge at this point. Firstly, are we all in a position to be choosers, to colonise “the future in relation to the past”, as Giddens has put it (Beck *et al.*, 1994, p. 74)? Are we all potential reflexive choosers who can in a virtuosic manner cobble our biographies? Secondly, has tradition lost indeed its hold and for whom? What this study has amply demonstrated is that young people do not make sense of themselves as engineers of their biographies. Rather their narrated experiences and perceptions of opportunity structures point to the fact that “social divisions which were seen as shaping life chances in modernity are still central to an understanding of structured inequalities in late modernity” (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007, p.142).

In an era of staggering inequalities and increased individualism, risks as Beck (1992) argues are unevenly distributed. This risk distribution however, according to Archer and Francis’s corrective of the individualization thesis, “operates through a more complex power geometry, in which it adheres to racialized, classed and gendered structures to create shifting patterns of vulnerability and fragility or protection and safety” (Archer and Francis, 2006, p.45). With particular reference to racialization, Rattansi astutely argues that racialized “discourses are drawn upon to legitimate projects of subject formation, inclusion and exclusion, discrimination, inferiorization, exploitation” (1994, p.58).

Young people being “at the crossroads of social reproduction” (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007, p.3) can make choices and follow educational routes that are rooted in the wider power relations. Accordingly to their social positions they have conditioned access to economic and socio-cultural advantages, resources and social networks. In this material and perceptual grid, the educational decisions made and the pathways followed are part of personal histories, of familial habituses and of their evolving understanding of

themselves and their places in their world. Some of them are played out as a strategic yet natural reproduction of advantage (Bourdieu, 1976) yet for others reflect the pragmatic evaluation of the multilevel necessities and constraints. This is not to argue that reproduction occurs in a linear, teleological manner whereby young people perform their social destinies, like pawns, with the less or more hidden hand of institutional agents. As Lareu and Horvat claim “the process of social reproduction is not a continual, deterministic one. Rather, it is shaped moment by moment in particular social fields” (1999, p.50).

In this highly stratified social space, different social groups get differentially and hierarchically positioned in terms of privileges and assets that lend to their voices unequal authoritative power. That brings the dimension of power relations and of *unequal distribution of power and resources* at the centre of the debate on selfhood and choice, with the calls of redistribution and recognition being equally appropriate and inter-dependent (Frazer and Honneth, 2003). Social research and theory, seen in this complex context, have to continue to shed light on the lived realities of young people as they locate themselves and form their belongings in the globalized world. They have also to grapple with the multitudinous and changing ways that educational institutions collude in the reproduction of inequalities.

Concluding thoughts: the challenge for education

Dominant educational approaches rhetorically deal with the purported ‘particularities’ of the student population on the grounds of a ‘politics of diversity’ that articulates, as Lentin and Titley eloquently put it, “a form of post-materialist identity politics which fuses positivity [...] with a studious avoidance of structural inequalities” (2008, p.21). These politics may enable the articulation of “positive values and aspirations” yet they are characterized by a “melange of multiculturalist assumptions, management philosophies and individualist diagnoses and solutions” (ibid). This kind of

multiculturalist politics seems insufficient to tackle the entwined legacies of glaring inequalities, racism and absolutism that plague contemporary societies (Troyna and Carrington, 1990). It is pertinent to refer to at this point to the caveat that Burbules has entered regarding the limits of the dominant paradigm of multiculturalism:

The framework within which multiculturalism often takes shape, a broad (and sometimes patronizing) ‘tolerance’ for difference, leaves dominant beliefs and values largely unquestioned – indeed even insulated from challenge and change – because they are shielded within the comforting self- conception of openness and inclusivity.(2000, p.258)

Bearing the spirit of this critique in mind, it can be further argued that educational research and policies seem to narrowly follow the current orthodoxies of individualized and psychologized approaches to diversity that are geared at and legitimize a version of a “disconnected pluralism” (Biesta, 2006). The over-emphasis on individual-centered matters, such as the self-esteem and the purported ‘needs’ and ‘particularities’ of minority children and young people, seems to displace the onus of responsibility from the state policies and the blatant lack of resources to the individuals themselves and their families. Additionally, through the sailing along the tide of what Ecclestone and Hayes provocatively call “therapeutic ethos” that currently pervades and re-defines the role of education, a “political construction of a diminished self” is achieved (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009, p.164). In this way, the focusing on ‘needs’, ‘differences’ and ‘tolerance’ plasters over the inadequacy of educational reformers to render education of high intellectual caliber available not only to the moneyed elites, but equally to all, irrespectively of social class, ethnicity, ‘race’ and gender.

If the aforementioned goal of making rigorous and stimulating education equally available to all young people is ever to be actualized, it necessitates the opening up of pedagogic encounters that place experience at their core and cultivate autonomy and empowerment, without relapsing into the social engineering of ego-centered, self-

absorbed and hence dis-empowered individuals. This chimes well with a re-definition of the purpose of education closer to the Deweyian perspective that speaks of the creation of educational spaces where open-ended dialogue, experimentalism and fallibilism are not renounced but celebrated (1916; 1938). It is an education that aims at the creation of democratic, tolerant and respectful school communities where children and young people learn and re-invent democracy “as a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (Dewey, 1916, p.93).

The above can be framed within a project that aims at a political shift from what Lingard (2007) calls the “pedagogies of indifference” to the crafting of socially just, humanist and productive pedagogies (Lingard, 2005; Hayes et al, 2006). For the crafting of socially just pedagogies is required a restructuring of political agenda in such ways that can encompass both the redistributive and recognition-related issues that schooling in the neo-liberal age grapples with. Nonetheless it would have been certainly oversimplistic and naïve to claim that education alone can address the intricate and deeply entrenched issues of staggering inequalities in resources and representation.

Extending this point, it can be argued that there is a lot of contestation, dis-identification and resistance going on while social agents make their ways through the educational system. There is also lack of resources and educational policies that do not challenge the issues that young people have raised in this study and are closely related with the core of the educational message which in Bernstein’s terms (1971) consists of curriculum, assessment and, more fundamentally, of pedagogy. It is particularly pedagogy which, being notoriously neglected by the attempted educational reforms continues to be rooted in hierarchical relations of power, where the young people are denied dialogue, where they are silenced and marginalized. It is exactly these pedagogic relations that fixate young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to “devalued educational spaces” and give rise to feelings of “educational worthlessness” (Reay, 2006, p.297).

Yet it is necessitated, as Lingard and Mills put it, that “pedagogies make as much difference as is feasible” through being “connected to place, space, real and virtual, and biographies, supportive yet demanding, and working with and valuing difference” (2007, p.238). More importantly, it is required that in addition to these parameters, heightened focus and care is devoted to the intellectual qualities of the pedagogic message (Bernstein, 1971) “so as to ensure a more equal access to and distribution of intellectual capital and related dispositional capacities” (Lingard and Mills, 2007, p.236 ; see also Hayes *et al*, 2006).

If changes that make a difference to children’s and young people’ lived realities are to be weaved in the institutional fabric of schools, it is crucial that the former are equally provided with the “technology of intellectual inquiry” (Bourdieu, 1990c, p.309) so as to be able not only to understand but change the world and their place in it (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009).

Appendices

A. Interview Schedule

The goals of the study, as outlined in the thesis, and the research questions led to the formulation of the following generic interview questions:

- How do young people make sense of themselves? Who do they say they are? Where do they feel as belonging?
- How do they conceptualize their ethno-national, gendered and classed identifications? Are they central to the ways they perceive themselves?
- How do young people experience their family's migration history? Where the young people and their parents were born? Which were the reasons underlying migration? What is the length of their residence in Greece? Do they have they plans for going back to their countries?
- How do young people experience and perceive their family's socio-economic position or family's moving between positions? (Cases of down-ward and up-ward mobility with reference to the socio-economic position they possessed in country of origin)
- How do young people narrate themselves as learners? How do they position themselves academically?
- How did young people go about deciding between comprehensive and vocational schooling? Were their ethno-national, gendered and classed positionalities implicated in the processes of decision-making and in which ways?
- Which are the family's attitudes towards schooling? In which ways are they involved in young people's educational lives?

- Which are the familial values, expectations and strategies and how they come to be perceived by young people? To which extent are the former shaping young people's educational experiences, expectations and decisions?
- How school's institutional arrangements operate to inform their expectations and decisions?
- How are educators involved in the shaping of young people's academic biographies and learner identities? In which ways are the teachers involved in the educational decision-making over post-16 schools?
- How are young people's best friends positioned academically? What sort of decisions have they made regarding post-compulsory schooling? What is their ethnic background?
- Which are young people's educational and professional expectations and plans?
- How do young people envisage their future lives? In which ways they feel as able to fulfill their planning and expectations?
- How do they perceive their horizons of opportunities and constraints?

B. Sample of interview ‘raw’ data

Translated extracts from the interview with Helen

Evgenia: I would like to discuss about the things that relate with how you come to perceive yourself. Think about it [pause] What are the aspects of yourself that make you who you are?

Helen: There are many things that make me who I am; that I am Greek; my religion and my family mostly have influenced me but also the whole environment, the fact that I live where I live and my friends. I think that you do not always realize that these things are influencing you

E: You referred to religion, to family and to the fact that you are Greek. Would you like to tell me a bit more on that?

H: In general I regard all people as equal; I don't have racist convictions. I do think we differ, not in merit- because all people are of equal merit and worth- however there is difference; we differ in terms of mentality and style of life and speech. Generally speaking every people have its own characteristics. I don't know how it would have been if I were born elsewhere. Possibly it is the mentality and the way we behave, the way they accept you- not accept, to put it better- the way they react towards you; how the other looks at you, gives you a characteristic image of yourself that renders you different in relation to the other, in terms of difference and diversity of civilizations. Well, I don't know whether if I were born in a different country, I would have the same opinions I have now, maybe not

E: How do you experience that you are Greek? What does this mean to you?

H: It is all the history, the civilization, the religion, the language, the ideals [pause] Usually Hellenism goes hand with hand with [Christian] Orthodoxy, meaning that religion goes in the middle. Hellenism is not the state, it is all the people who feel Greek and usually hold Greek citizenship, they live within and out of the borders of Greek state, meaning that Greek migrants of diaspora are also Greek. For someone is Greek not only due to genes, that is heredity, but also due to the legacy and that means that we feel as motherland [patrida] not the state where we live but the state where we and our parents were brought up. Hellenism brings in mind also History namely whatever Hellenism virtually achieved

E: You mentioned that what has influenced who you are has to do in a significant degree with your religion. What do you mean by that?

H: Religion is not only the ritual, it is all the rest. It essentially includes too many aspects, behaviours, way of life and perhaps the whole climate of one's life and the

family too. I think that some people try to tell us that religion is old-fashioned therefore whatever concerns religion, Orthodoxy and the rest, is old-fashioned.

E: Have you discussed with friends and acquaintances in personal level and they made you believe that going to the church is something outmoded, outdated?

H: For I go to church very often [hesitantly]. With my classmates who know each other well we have discussed about it many times. Maybe some regard it outdated, that is that some consider it as indeed behind the times – ‘are you going to the church every Sunday? - that is so out-dated’ they say

E: Do you believe that being a woman exerts any influence on the way you think about your professional future and the decisions you have made?

H: We have grown up in a society where men and women are equals, so I have not thought in these terms up until now. Now that I’m thinking about my future, they say that a woman cannot study until 35-40; for example I was thinking to join the army, the military medicine school and I was thinking that I had to move to different places regularly or if I wanted to study medicine it takes you after 30 to finish your specialization. I was thinking about that; that is difficult to link family with this kind of studies.

Αποσπασμα απο την συνέντευξη με την Ελενη στα Ελληνικά

Ευγενία: Θα ήθελα να μιλήσουμε για κάποια πράγματα που έχουν να κάνουν με το πως αντιλαμβάνεσαι τον εαυτό σου. Σκέψου το λίγο. Ποιες πλευρες του εαυτού σου θεωρεις οτι σε κανουν να εισαι αυτο που εισαι;

Ελένη:Ειναι πολλά πράγματα που με κανουν να είμαι αυτή που είμαι. Το οτι είμαι Ελληνίδα. Με έχουν επηρεάσει πολύ και η θρησκεία και η οικογένεια μου, ίσως και όλο το περιβαλλον, οι φίλοι μου, το οτι μένω εδώ που μένω.Νομίζω είναι η θρησκεία και η οικογένεια κυρίως, αλλά όλα αυτά γίνονται υποσυνείδητα , δε ξέρεις οτι σε επηρεάζει κάτι

Ευγενία: Αναφέρθηκες στη θρησκεία και οικογένεια, αλλά και στο γεγονός οτι είσαι Ελληνίδα. Θα ήθελες να μου πεις κατι παραπάνω σχετικα με αυτό;

Ελένη:Γενικά θεωρώ όλους τους ανθρώπους ισότιμους, δηλ δεν έχω ρατσιστικές αντιλήψεις (παύση) Γενικά πιστεύω οτι διαφέρουμε, όχι ως προς την αξια, όλοι ειναι ισάξιοι και ισότιμοι, δηλ υπάρχει διαφορετικοτητα, διαφέρουμε ως προς την νοοτροπία ως προς τον τρόπο που μιλάμε. Γενικά ο κάθε λαός έχει τα χαρακτηριστικά του. Τώρα δε ξέρω πως θα σκεφτόμουν αν θα είχα γεννηθεί αλλού. Ίσως είναι η νοοτροπία, ο τρόπος συμπεριφοράς, αλλά και το πως σε δεχονται-όχι σε δεχονται- ο τρόπος αντίδρασης ουσιαστικά , το πως φαίνεσαι στον άλλον, αυτό σου δίνει μια εικόνα χαρακτηριστική του εαυτού σου που σε κανει να διαφέρεις απο κάποιον άλλον, ως προς την διαφορετικότητα κ τους αλλους πολιτισμούς.Τώρα δε ξέρω αν είχα γεννηθεί σε μια άλλη χώρα αν θα είχα τις απόψεις που έχω τώρα, μπορεί όχι

Ευγενία: Το οτι είσαι Ελληνίδα πώς το βιώνεις, τι σημαινει για σενα; Τι θα έλεγες οτι κανει έναν Έλληνα να είναι Έλληνας;

Ελένη:Η κοινή θρησκεία, ιστορία, πολιτισμός, ιδανικά. Συνήθως ο Ελληνισμός πηγαίνει χέρι με χέρι και με την Ορθοδοξία, δηλ μπαίνει και η θρησκεία στη μέση.

Ευγενία:Την λεξη Ελληνισμός με τι την συνδέεις στο μυαλό σου;

Ελένη: Δεν είναι το κράτος ειναι όλοι εκείνοι οι άνθρωποι που νιώθουν Έλληνες κ συνήθως έχουν την ελληνική υπηκοότητα και ζουν και έντος και εκτός του κράτους, δηλαδή και οι Έλληνες μετανάστες της διασποράς ειναι Έλληνες. Γιατί ουσιαστικά κάποιος δεν ειναι Έλληνας λόγω γονιδίων, κληρονομικότητας δηλαδή, αλλά και κάποιες φορές νιώθουμε την πατρίδα μας όχι το κράτος στο οποίο μένουμε αλλά το κρατος που έχουμε μεγαλώσει (παύση) Οι ρίζες παίζουν σημαντικό ρόλο από άποψη δηλαδή συναισθηματική, εγώ αν είχα γεννηθεί στη Γερμανία π.χ. θα αισθανομουν Ελληνίδα (παύση) Ο ελληνισμός σε πάει στο μυαλό και στην Ιστορία δηλαδή το τι πέτυχε ουσιαστικά ο Ελληνισμός

Ευγενία: Ανέφερες οτι αυτό που σε εχει επηρεασει αυτό που είσαι έχει να κανει σε σημαντικό βαθμό με την θρησκεία σου. Πώς το εννοείς αυτο;

Ελένη: Η θρησκεία δεν είναι μόνο το τελετουργικό, η θρησκεία είναι όλα τα υπόλοιπα. Ουσιαστικά περιλαμβάνει και πάρα πολλές πλευρές, συμπεριφορές, τρόπο ζωής και ίσως όλο το κλίμα γενικά της ζωής κάποιου, και την οικογένεια. Νομίζω ότι κάποιοι προσπαθούν να μας πουν ότι η θρησκεία είναι παλιομοδίτικη, επομένως ό,τι ακουστεί περί θρησκείας, ορθοδοξίας και τα λοιπά, είναι παλιομοδίτικο

Ευγενία: Έχεις κάνει συζητήσεις με φίλους κ γνωστούς σε προσωπικό επίπεδο και σε έκαναν να πιστεύεις ότι το να πηγαίνει κανείς στην Εκκλησία είναι κάτι ξεπερασμένο, κάτι αναχρονιστικό;

Ελένη: Επειδή εγώ πάω στην Εκκλησία πολύ συχνά (με δισταγμό) Με τα παιδιά που είμαστε στο ίδιο τμήμα και ξέρει ο ένας τον άλλο καλά, έχουμε κάνει συζητήσεις πολλές φορές. Ίσως κάποιοι το θεωρούν ξεπερασμένο, δηλ κάποιοι το θεωρούν όντως πολύ πίσω. Πηγαίνεις κάθε τόσο στην εκκλησία; Είναι ξεπερασμένο, λένε αυτοί

Ευγενία: Το ότι είσαι γυναίκα ασκεί πιστεύεις κάποια επιρροή στον τρόπο που σκέφτεσαι οσον αφορά το επαγγελματικό σου μέλλον και τις αποφάσεις που έχεις πάρει;

Ελένη: Έχουμε μεγαλώσει σε μια κοινωνία όπου άντρες και γυναίκες είναι ισότιμοι και έτσι δε το είχα σκεφτεί με αυτόν τον τρόπο καθόλου μέχρι στιγμής. Τώρα που σκέφτομαι το μέλλον μου, λένε ότι μια γυναίκα δε μπορεί να σπουδάξει μέχρι τα 35-40, εγώ που σκεφτόμουν να περάσω στο στρατό, στα ΣΑΣ, ιατρική, το σκεφτόμουν κι αυτό ότι θα άλλαζα συνέχεια κατοικία ή άλλα που σκέφτομαι ιατρική, μετά τα 30 θα τελειώσεις την ειδικότητα σου. Το σκεφτόμουν αυτό κάπως ότι είναι δύσκολο να συνδέσεις την οικογένεια με τις σπουδές

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